

FENIMORE COOPER

AND HIS CRITICS

AMERICAN, BRITISH AND FRENCH CRITICISMS
OF
THE NOVELIST'S EARLY WORK

Thèse complémentaire pour le Doctorat ès-Lettres
présentée
à la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Paris

PAR

MARCEL CLAVEL

ANCIEN ÉLÈVE DE L'ÉCOLE NORMALE SUPÉRIEURE
AGRÉGÉ DE L'UNIVERSITÉ
CHARGÉ DE COURS DE LANGUE ET LITTÉRATURE ANGLAISES
A LA FACULTÉ DES LETTRES DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'AIX-MARSEILLE

IMPRIMERIE UNIVERSITAIRE DE PROVENCE

E. FOURCINE

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AND HIS CRITICS

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INTRODUCTION

We* do not see why we should conceal the fact that the present book is primarily the result of an inferiority complex — a complex under which we laboured, sixteen years ago, when we began our research work on Cooper, amid the indulgent but ironical smiles of American intellectuals, for whom the great novelist was a mere « writer for boys », hardly worthy of the passing notice of university critics. We felt at the time — and, to a certain extent, we still feel to-day — that the usefulness of a minute study of Cooper's life and work, attended with « all the pomp and circumstance » of academical criticism, would be better understood — and more willingly recognized — were it accompanied by an account of the world-wide, and — in spite of appearances — lasting, reputation of the author of the *Pilot* and of the *Last of the Mohicans*.

This does not mean, however, that we did not realize from the outset the intrinsic value of such an account — provided it

*In order to disarm anglo-saxon criticism, a fitting epigraph for the present work might, perhaps, have been found in Cooper's *Letter to His Countrymen* (pp. 21-23):

« The style of the critique struck me, as having the involution of another language... In English, under a fiction of a plurality of writers, it is permitted to say *we*, when the writer alludes to himself; but it becomes obviously absurd, when it is expressly stated that there is but *one* writer...

These peculiarities might certainly have passed as slovenly composition under other circumstances, although a *critic* who is so vulnerable makes but an indifferent figure at fault-finding...

The reasoning of the *critique* is French. It has a flavor of the academic strut... »

were detailed enough, and sufficiently impartial to present, with the same fullness, the darker as well as the brighter side of the picture. We never shared Lounsbury's contempt for that « defunct criticism » (1) which, like many of Cooper's later critics, he often neglected to his cost. On the contrary, we always admired the late Professor Cairns' elaborate studies of *British Criticisms of American Writings*, and our initial — and very ambitious purpose — was to do for Cooper, in world-literature, what Professor Cairns had done for him in connection with a limited period of English literary history (1821-1833).

As might have been expected, the magnitude of the task dawned upon us by degrees, and the existence of concise but valuable surveys of Cooper's reputation in both Germany and Spain (2) soon reconciled us to the idea of limiting our researches to America, England and France, i. e. the three countries with which Cooper's life and work were most closely associated.

When necessity compelled us to print only the first half of our biography of Cooper as our main thesis, we naturally decided upon a similar course for the minor one, so that the present volume, notwithstanding its bulk, deals but with the appreciations of Cooper's early works, to wit : *Precaution*, *The Spy*, *The Pioneers*, *The Pilot*, *Lionel Lincoln* and *The Last of the Mohicans*.

With regard to the plan we have adopted, and the method we have followed, a few words of explanation may be found necessary.

Our aim has been twofold. We have endeavoured to trace, on the one hand, the evolution of Cooper's reputation as a novelist — between the publication of his maiden novel in 1820 and that of his first semi-European work, *The Prairie*, in 1827 — and to follow, on the other hand, the evolution of critical opinion

(1) See LOUNSBURY's biography of Cooper, pp. 271 and 42.

(2) Cf. P.-A. BARBA: *Cooper in Germany*, Indiana Univ. Studies, May 15, 1914, pp. 51-104, and J. DE LANCEY FERGUSON: *American Literature in Spain*, Columbia Univ. Ph. D. 1916, chap. 3, pp. 32-54.

concerning each one of his early novels, from the time of its first appearance to the present day.

Obviously these two objects could not be achieved at the same time, hence the division of our work into two parts, the first devoted to general appreciations of Cooper's talent, the second to the chapters dealing with each novel in particular.

In both parts the grouping of the various criticisms according to the nationality of their author — or more exactly according to the country in which they were published (3) — was also necessary to avoid confusion. But a general summary, at the end of each chapter, allows the reader to survey the whole of the field that has just been covered.

The first part may appear somewhat sketchy, seeing that it is noticeably shorter than some of the chapters in the second part, but this seeming disproportion will be compensated « when time has made the pile complete », i. e. when our work is carried to its logical end ; for general critiques, exceedingly rare at the beginning of Cooper's career, became of course increasingly numerous, while the comparatively slight popularity of the later novels greatly diminished both the number and the size of the reviews of each new publication.

Concerning the originality of our work, we can say that it is practically complete for the American parts, since Miss D. WAPLES' Ph. D. dissertation (Yale 1932) has not been published (4).

In France G. D. MORRIS and, to a lesser extent, Miss M. M. GIBB have devoted a part of their Sorbonne theses (5) to the

(3) JOHN NEAL's articles in *Blackwood's* having been written for British consumption and having exerted their chief influence in the British Isles, it was natural enough to mention them in the British sections of our various chapters. Similarly Sorbonne Ph. D. dissertations, written in French by Americans or Canadians like G.-D. MORRIS or Miss M. M. GIBB, are listed in the French sections.

(4) This information was obtained through our bookseller, W. H. Allen, of Philadelphia, from the Yale University Press. (Letter dated, April 9, 1936).

(5) Cf. G. D. MORRIS: *Fenimore Cooper et Edgar Poe d'après la critique française du dix-neuvième siècle*. Paris, Larose, 1912, pp. 7-65, and M. M. GIBB: *Le Roman de Bas-de-Cuir. Etude sur Fenimore Cooper et son influence en France*. Paris, Champion, 1927, pp. 139-48.

study of French criticisms of Cooper's work. But they deal mostly with general appreciations of Cooper's talent and they are far too sparing of quotations. Besides they have failed to detect several glaring instances of plagiarism, which deprive some criticisms of practically all the value attached to them as expressions of French critical thought (6).

The chapter devoted to Cooper in W. B. CAIRNS' *British Criticisms of American Writings* is of course much more elaborate (7), but it is to be noted that it does not take into account all criticisms published after 1833, i. e. during the lapse of a full century. In addition W. B. Cairns overlooked a certain number of criticisms, both in the periodicals he had consulted and in those he had deemed useless to peruse while in England (8). The quotations, though generous enough as a rule, do not include certain passages which a student of Cooper cannot afford to miss. Finally Cairns fails to sum up, as it were, before passing from one novel to another, and to group together the remarks of each reviewer concerning the various aspects of each novel : plot, character-drawing, setting, style, etc.

In justice to Mr. J. F. COOPER, grandson of the novelist, we should add that he gave us a signal advantage over all our predecessors by allowing us to make use of the unpublished autobiographical notes, found too late to be included in his edition of the Cooper correspondence. It is true that we discovered after a time that these notes had been largely utilized by Griswold, in his *Prose Writers of America* (1847), but as Griswold had been careful not to reveal his sources, and as he had not dwelt upon the often paradoxical account Cooper had given of the reception of his various works, no one had been tempted to attach much importance to his declara-

(6) See for instance, in the following chapters, the use Philarète Chasles made of the Cooper critique in Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine* for April 1831, and of passages in the *Edinburgh Review* for October 1829.

(7) Cf. *University of Wisconsin Studies*, 1922, chap. 5. Only one half of this chapter, however, i.e. 23 pages, is devoted to the works studied by us.

(8) We must acknowledge, however, that Professor Cairns' flair was seldom at fault, for our reward has been scanty indeed in the 136 periodicals not listed in his book which we have examined at the British Museum or at the Bodleian.

tions. Thanks to this autobiographical material — which we print in full with the necessary comments at the end of this volume — we have been able to sound an original note at the beginning of each chapter, and to correct such hard-lived and wide-spread errors as the one concerning the so-called encouraging review of the *Spy* by the *North American* — a review which Cooper neither forgot nor forgave.

It is hardly necessary to call attention to the fact that a work like the present one — involving the handling of several thousands of volumes — could not have been carried through had we not been granted special privileges by broad-minded librarians.

We cherish in particular a most grateful remembrance of the untiring courtesy with which the librarians of the *British Museum* kept us, week after week, well supplied with «barrows» heavily laden with bound periodicals. We do not forget, however, the years when we were free to roam at will through the «stacks» of the ultra-modern library of the *University of Michigan* and to retire with our plunder to our personal «carroll» — *in angulo cum libro* !

In the *Cleveland Public Library* a small room was placed at our disposal to enable us to typewrite several copies of important criticisms, and the *Library of Congress* consented to send us valuable old periodicals through the Book Exchange. Even the *Bibliothèque Nationale* — thanks to the ingenuity of our former fellow-student at the Sorbonne, M^{lle} M. CHABRIER — found means to enable us to consult an important number of periodicals at each sitting.

At the *Yale University Library*, the *New York Public Library*, the *American Library in Paris*, and the *Bodleian* we also met with sympathetic and understanding librarians, who proved broad-constructionists in the interpretation of the regulations, in order to facilitate and shorten our task.

In connection with the typing or copying of the materials for this volume, we have been greatly helped by MISS MARY LOUGHIN, assistant-librarian at the University of Michigan, and by our wife, with the result that we have been able to concentrate on the discovery of reviews and articles not listed

in *Poole* or the *Readers' Guide*, and of occasional references to Cooper's works which could only be found through the actual perusal, page after page, of periodicals not provided with a detailed index (9).

We are indebted to the late PROFESSOR CAIRNS for a letter of courteous advice concerning the organization of our work at the British Museum, and to PROFESSOR CESTRE for his most encouraging approval of the first chapters of our work when they were submitted to him in 1929.

Finally we wish to express our deep gratitude to PROFESSOR CAZAMIAN, who kindly consented to undertake the official supervision of the present thesis and whose support has never failed us in the long years devoted to its preparation.

Montpezat-de-Quercy,
September 12th. 1937.

M. C.

(9) In the matter of proof-reading, we have been most fortunate in being able to avail ourselves of the kind services of Miss MARGARET MARY PHELAN, *Lectrice d'Anglais à la Faculté des Lettres d'Aix*.

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NOTE

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* has been our guide for the spelling of such verbs as : *to advise, to criticize*, etc.

With regard to the division of words, we have often been compelled to rest satisfied with the divisions which were allowed by some one or other of the dictionaries indicating the syllabication — regardless of English or American printing usage.

In the conclusion of each chapter, the abbreviations : U.S. (for America), E. (for England), F. (for France) have been used between parentheses to remind the reader of the origin of certain criticisms, e. g. *The Album* (E. 1823).

PART I

COOPER'S EARLY REPUTATION AS A NOVELIST

AMERICA

It is commonly admitted that Cooper had no literary reputation in his own country previous to the publication of his second novel, the *Spy*. Relying probably on the authority of his first biographer, and exaggerating the implications of one or two of his statements, most scholars still believe that Cooper's maiden-novel, *Precaution*, was emphatically given out as the work of an Englishman and that, if it did not prove an absolute failure, it « excited but little attention » in America (1). It is therefore of some import to point out that, only a few months after the appearance of *Precaution*, the *Literary and Scientific Repository and Critical Review* (2), a short-lived but important New York quarterly, did not hesitate to consider it as a genuine and representative American novel and to compare it at length with Maturin's *Melmoth* (3), whose « chimeras dire » and « feverish imaginations » were declared less acceptable than « the solidity and healthful spirit of *Precaution* ».

The dignified and manly note sounded at the beginning of this nine-page parallel certainly deserves to be rescued from oblivion :

We have now before us the last English and the last American novel ; and, startling as it may appear to some of our readers,

(1) Cf. LOUNSBURY, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 1883, pp. 20 and 28.

(2) Cf. April 1, 1821, pp. 364-75. *Precaution* was published in New York on Aug. 25, 1820 (according to Susan F. C.) and on November 10, 1820 (according to LOUNSBURY and to R. E. SPILLER's *Bibliography*).

(3) If we are to believe SAINTSBURY, the « powerful diablerie » of *Melmoth* « has never ceased to fascinate some readers in each generation ». (Cf. *A Short History of English Literature*, London, Macmillan, 1916, p. 690).

who are inclined to think nothing praiseworthy that is native, we mean to examine their merits comparatively. We hope to see the day arrive, when an American author will not have to send his book to England, causing it to make a double voyage, ere his countrymen will receive it with impartiality.

This patriotic wish was fulfilled in part upon the appearance of the *Spy* — so far at least as the general public was concerned — as is shown by Cooper's own statements concerning the rapid and unprecedented sale of the work (4). On the other hand Susan Fenimore Cooper spoke nothing but the bare truth when she stated that most critics « waited for the word of command from England, ere committing themselves » (5).

Dennie's *Portfolio*, confident perhaps in its well-established reputation, ventured, it is true, to praise the new novel with sufficient assurance some three months before the first English reviews of the work could reach the United States :

...We are delighted with so fair a specimen of native talent — and with the exhibition of such materials as confirm the opinion, that although we possess no popular traditions to enchain the imagination, yet in the history, the character, and the varied face of our country, there exists an ample fund for interesting narrations. (6)

This, however, was but one honourable exception, and it is to be noted that the reviewer refrained from making any comparison between the Author of the *Spy* and the Author of *Waverley*.

Such comparisons do not seem to have appeared in American periodicals before American critics had been able to see them made in British reviews of the London edition of the *Spy*, but, in this connection, American reviewers evinced a curious tendency to run to extremes, some of them going so far as to attack and almost abuse the *Great Unknown* the better

(4) Cf. autobiographical notes (1842) in appendix I.

(5) *Pages and Pictures*, p. 30.

(6) February 1822, p. 90. Cooper, BRYANT tells us, never forgot this encouraging review, *Vide infra* the chapter on the *Spy*.

to substantiate the claims of his American rival, while others forcefully expressed their disapproval of the practice of calling the Author of the *Spy* : the Scott of America.

An article in *Niles' Weekly Register* for May 25, 1822, written in the former vein, is quite entertaining in its way :

Led on by the mighty clamor that was made about « the Pirate », (the work of « the Great Unknown », though generally believed to be Sir Walter Scott), when it first appeared in the United States, I snatched enough time to read that romance — and, having done so, a spirit of national pride induced me to go over « the *Spy* ». I make no pretensions to the character of a critic, and only know what pleases and interests myself — and, according to this scale, « the *Spy* » is as much the superior of « the Pirate » as the flow of genius excels the dull drudgery of book-making — though the latter contains many chapters worthy of the highest admiration of those who esteem books of this class.

The author of « the *Spy* » is said to be engaged in writing a new work to be called « the *Pioneers of the Susquehannah* ». The opportunity is happily fitted to ascertain whether the British are willing to return our courtesy, as to such matter as makes up about a third part of the volumes of « the great unknown » — that is, barbarous words, difficult to read and understand, and worth nothing, except to swell the size of the book, when read and understood. We would respectfully suggest that, in his new work, our author should introduce a dozen or two *Mohawks*, and suffer them to jabber freely in their own tongue, or half English half Indian, if he pleases. The more uncouth and unintelligible the jargon is, the better — the closer will be the copy of « the great unknown ». The roasting of a prisoner now and then might also be well, to hold up the manners of the times to admiration ! and a warrior driving his tomahawk into the skull of his enemy, would furnish as pretty a plot as many of those so elegantly set forth in the « Scotch novels ! »

On the contrary, the famous article on the *Spy* in the *North American Review* (7) is a typical instance of the veneration in which the Boston critics held the literary glories of Great

(7) July 1822, p. 250-82.

Britain. Whether its purpose was « to lessen the book in the public estimation », as Cooper himself tells us (8), or whether the critic (9) felt a genuine horror at comparing an American writer with the Great Unknown, certain it is that such a passage as the following now seems to us greatly exaggerated :

There is no compliment, in that unmeaning adulation, which has styled the author of the *Spy* the Scott of America ; nor do we think public sentiment, in this part of the country, will bear out a pretension so extravagant. At any rate, for ourselves, we do not hesitate to say, that although uncommon powers are here exhibited, from which we have a right to augur yet better things, we have discerned nothing in this production which draws the writer a step nearer to the author of the *Waverley* novels, than it does to Shakspeare himself.

The record sale of three thousand five hundred copies of the *Pioneers* on the first morning of its publication naturally caused *Niles' Weekly Register* to renew with more assurance its former comparison between the rising American novelist and the author of *Waverley*. On February 8, 1823 a short paragraph ran as follows :

The Pioneers. It was announced in the New York papers, that this long-expected work would be ready for delivery the next morning — and, by 12 o'clock on that day, the publisher had given out *thirty five hundred copies* ! This is, indeed « something new », in the United States. From the specimens that we have seen of this work, it does not appear likely to fail in a comparison with the best product of the « wizard of the north », as the author of the Scotch novels is called, by way of eminence.

This same comparison again occurred in a longer article, dated March 22, in which the critic could not help having another fling at the dialectal passages in the Scotch Novels.

Dennie's *Portfolio* for March, more dignified but somewhat

(8) Autobiographical notes. See appendix I.

(9) W. H. GARDINER.

too reserved, merely suggested that a comparison was not altogether out of the question :

The ingenious writer has submitted a new claim to encouragement and applause, which will readily be recognized, at home, by those who feel the love of country or the love of letters ; whilst abroad, it will be hailed by men of generous minds, with that cordiality which is felt when we behold a worthy competitor, in a noble enterprize (10).

In June, however, the same periodical (11), published an extract from the *Gazette of the United States* which fully consecrated the fame of the American novelist, no longer anonymous then :

The Pioneers. — The new novel, entitled *The Pioneers*, seems to have excited a sensation among the artists, altogether unprecedented in the history of our domestic literature. We learn from New York that Mr. Dunlap has on his easel a painting from the work, in oil, five or six feet square ; and there is another, of similar size, by a competitor, whose name has not been mentioned to us. In Philadelphia, Mr. Fairman and Mr. Childs, have several designs in hand, which are intended for the embellishment of *The Port Folio*. We have seen at the Athenæum in this city, an illustration of the Panther scene, which had been particularly selected for the attention of artists by the writer of a review of *The Pioneers* in a late number of the *Port Folio*. It is a painting in water colours by Mr. Thompson, of Susquehanna County. The scenery in his neighbourhood is similar to that of the supposed location of the tale ; and we think in this respect, that the painter is entitled to much praise. His design is also good ; but the figures are not in so commendable a taste. Mr. Cooper has also had the good fortune to call forth the Muse of poetry to sing his praises, as we observe in some of the Eastern papers. In short, poetry and painting seem to have combined with criticism, in rewarding our author for the engaging manner in which he has depicted our own fire-sides. In assigning to Mr. Cooper a high station among the novelists of the present day

(10) Cf. p. 230.

(11) Cf. p. 520.

readers and critics cheerfully concur ; and no discordant notes are heard but from prejudice or malignity.

At the beginning of 1824 the publication of the *Pilot* — the first genuine sea-novel — might have convinced all American critics that Cooper was not only a worthy rival of the Great Unknown but a truly original genius as well. Unfortunately, as Cooper explains in his autobiographical notes, « This book was on a plan so novel, that the critics... did not know how to receive it. For several weeks its fate was doubtful... Until we heard from England, Wiley and I fancied it a failure. » While practically all the British reviewers realized at once that the author of the *Pilot* could be compared with no one except the author of *Roderick Random*, the American periodicals kept lamentably silent on this essential point, even after British critical opinion had long been known in America.

It is particularly painful to-day to read in Dennie's *Portfolio* (12), so friendly to Cooper as a rule, a conclusion like the following :

In proportion to the lively interest with which we observe the progress of this writer, is our regret that he should have restricted the enjoyment of this production, by the undue admixture of maritime occurrences, detailed in the peculiar jargon of seamen. To such persons, all the circumstances to which we allude and the language in which they are described, present nothing new. They are, moreover, not precisely that description of readers whose approbation a man of letters should be ambitious to obtain. Mr. Cooper has given sufficient evidence that he has the means of enriching our native stock of literature in this department, and we cordially wish that he may go on rejoicing in his course.

Even the *United States Literary Gazette* (Boston) — which Cooper had probably in mind when stating (13) that the American reputation of the *Pilot* « certainly came from the East » — did not hint at Cooper's originality as a sea-novelist

(12) Cf. February 1824, p. 146.

(13) See autobiographical notes (1842) in appendix I.

and as a rival of Smollett. Tom Coffin, it is true, was hailed as a « perfectly original » character, but the novel as a whole was merely considered as a proof of Cooper's progress in his art :

Mr. Cowper (sic) has one valuable faculty... the faculty of improvement. *Precaution* was a poor book ; the *Spy* was a very good one, though not so good as the *Pioneers* ; and the *Pilot* we think better than either. (14)

As for the *North American* (15), it proved so lukewarm that Cooper construed its review as an attempt to damn the book with faint praise (16), while the *New Haven Christian Spectator* for February 1825, after discussing the *Pilot* as an « imitation Waverley novel », wondered whether the author could « do nothing better for his country and for the world than to indite such novels » (17).

The result was that an important part of the American public was made aware of Cooper's claims as a sea-novelist through a *Scotch* article reprinted in the *New York Mirror* for December 4, 1824 (18), an article in which the superiority of the author of the *Pilot* was recognized by one of Smollett's own countrymen !

In 1825, if we are to believe Cooper's own statements (19), the comparative failure of *Lionel Lincoln* encouraged some ill-wishers to announce openly the end of its author's career. Still, as we shall see later, the disappointment of most periodicals was expressed by their silence rather than by unfavourable comments, and one New England periodical at least, the *United States Literary Gazette* (20), was so pleased with the commemoration of the great days of Lexington and Bunker

(14) Cf. April 1, 1824, p. 6.

(15) Cf. April 1824, pp. 314-29.

(16) Cf. autobiographical notes (1842).

(17) Cf. p. 87.

(18) Cf. p. 151. The original article was published in the *Edinburgh Scotsman*.

(19) Cf. autobiographical notes (1844-45).

(20) Cf. March 1, 1825, p. 337.

Hill that it prefixed a warm eulogy of Cooper's talent to its flattering review of the novel :

The faculty of giving to a story that dramatic interest, which arises from variety of character, forcible delineation, and picturesque grouping, or, in other words, the powers of observation, discrimination, and description are possessed by Mr. Cooper in a very high degree ; and it is with national pride and pleasure that we see these powers employed upon subjects so worthy of them. Brief as is the period since history first saw our infant nation cradled in a howling wilderness, she has found much to tell of deeds of high emprise. She offers to the novelist abundance of materials, — the harvest is rich enough, and we rejoice to welcome labourers so worthy to gather it.

The Last of the Mohicans, of course, to borrow a phrase from Bryant's Memorial Oration, « more than recovered the ground lost by its predecessor » and Cooper was hailed as « The American Novelist » *par excellence*, while the comparisons with Scott, when they cropped up again, were made with a greater sense of Cooper's originality.

Thus the *New York Review* for March 1826 (21) speaks as follows of « the Ariosto of the North » and of « him of the West » :

The comparison which the tattle of the novel-reading generation persists in suggesting between his [Cooper's] tales and those of the Author of Waverley, is idle in every respect but one. There is the same anxiety in the reading public here, for the appearance of the creations of the Ariosto of the North, and of him of the West ; they are devoured with the same appetite ; and the interest they excite leaves even the eye of criticism no leisure to rest upon doubtful parts and proportions of the structure, during the first rapid and restless survey. And even when curiosity has been satiated, and cooler reason is free to analyse the incongruities or defects in the magic web of fiction, in which the imagination has been enthralled, without the power of examining its texture and consistency, we approach the suspicious portions with fear and trembling. We have been under the influence of a high-

(21) Cf. pp. 285-87 and 292.

wrought spell, and feel a natural timidity, in calling the necromancer to an account for the reasons of his proceedings, or the manner of conducting his cunning operations.

In addition Cooper is recognized as a poet whose creations deserve immortality :

Sober judgment can only exercise its functions on a second perusal. If any doubt has remained as to the author's power as an imaginative writer, it must be removed by this experiment. He is a *poet* ; and if his creations should not be immortal, it will be the work of the perverse and incalculable accident of time ; for multitudes, less worthy, have a niche in the temple of memory.

And the review closes on a note just as flattering for the novelist who stands unrivalled in his own country :

Our author stands alone among his countrymen ; in solitary and enviable distinction. He has proved the capabilities of our history and varying manners, for all the purposes of high or pleasing fiction. We hope that his career may be yet long ; for the delight of his contemporaries, and the still increasing progress of his own fame. He is one of those who, like his favourite Hawkeye, gathers his materials chiefly from an acute observation of men and things, rather than from the labours of others as they have left them in their books. And the reputation of « this kind passeth not away » with the caprice of popular appetite ; for truth is immortal ; and the gifted few whose quick perceptions enable them to paint from realities, are sure of being remembered while human nature is the same.

The comparison with Scott is also found in the address delivered by CHARLES KING at the public dinner offered to Cooper on the eve of his departure for Europe (22) :

To the works of Mr. Cooper we may... refer as evidence that if fine, vigorous, and original conception, a quick and happy perception, and exquisite delineation of the beauties of nature —

(22) May 29, 1826. See our main thesis chap. XII. The address is quoted in full by R.-E. SPILLER (pp. 92-94, of his biography of Cooper.)

a power hardly surpassed of portraying the deep and strong passions of the human heart — a capacity to excite and to sustain the most breathless interest in the fortunes of those whom he brings upon the scene — if any or all these (sic) constitute genius, it may be claimed for him. Praise indeed can hardly go higher than by merely alluding to the fact that the works of our associate and guest whom we referred to, are, if it be desired to class them, almost instinctively compared to those of the Great Enchanter of the North, who from his Scottish hillside has so long exercised his potent spell over the whole reading world. To have sprung thus full-grown into existence, and to have taken a place at once, if not beside, at least in close approach to, the Great Master of the art, *proximus a primo*, is glory enough. It would, indeed, seem that the great events of our revolutionary contest, the wild and peculiar habits of our early settlers, and the deeply interesting, and, alas ! rapidly vanishing aboriginal race of this continent have inspired the pen of the American novelist, and that he has looked with a poet's fancy and a painter's eye upon the grandeur and magnificence of our mountain scenery, the varied tints and glorious sunshine of our autumn skies and woods, our rushing cataracts, and mighty rivers, and forests co-eval with nature. But it is not my purpose, nor can it be necessary in this place to enter into a detailed notice of the works of our distinguished associate. In referring to them as has been done, the chief object was to show that in refuting, as by their well-earned popularity they have had the effect of doing, the zealously inculcated notion that on our soil « fancy sickens and genius dies », a national benefit has been conferred.

As for GARDINER's combined review of the *Pioneers* and of the *Mohicans*, which appeared in the *North American* for July 1826 (23), it could not, of course, include a comparison repudiated with horror in Gardiner's preceding review of the *Spy*. The Boston critic, therefore, preferred to recognize — *de facto* perhaps more than *de jure* ! — Cooper's claims to the title of « The American Novelist » :

The experiment of adapting American scenes, events, and characters to historical romance, was suggested but a few years

ago. It has since been abundantly tried, and is still going on to such an extent that we should have ample cause to regret the little countenance we may have given it, did we feel ourselves called upon to review, or even to read, half the trash which appears daily under this disguise. Mr. Cooper, however, has the almost singular merit of writing American novels which everybody reads, and which we are of course bound to review now and then. For these last five or six years he has supplied the reading public annually with a repast of five or six hundred pages of such matter ; so that we have a right to consider him as publicly professing this department of elegant literature. It is too late to say, that he does not excel in it ; or at least, that he has not some considerable merit ; for however far he may fall short of our ideal standards, or wherever we may rank him among living writers, the public voice has long since confirmed to him the appellation of the American novelist, a title which was but sparingly and timidly suggested for the author of the *Spy*. No one has yet appeared among us who has been wholly able to cope with him in his proper walk ; and we see no good reason why he should not be allowed, for the present at least, to maintain the distinction.

The only allusion to the respective merits of Scott and Cooper is to be found in a paragraph where Gardiner defends his countryman in a way which the latter would, probably, have identified with the process of « damning with faint praise » :

The five tales which have been named above, certainly exhibit a variety of original character and novel incident, which entitles their author to the praise of great powers of invention ; and with all their faults, they have that redeeming virtue of a novel, a power of warming the imagination and exciting, for the moment a glowing interest in fictitious personages and visionary scenes. We have met persons, indeed, deficient neither in sound judgment, nor refined taste, nor yet with minds wholly destitute of fanciful association, who are bold enough to say that they cannot work their way through one of Cooper's novels. Such readers we are strongly inclined to suspect of unfair dealing. They take up Cooper and are exceedingly disappointed, that he does not turn out to be Scott. In the first place, it is ten to one

that they cannot abide an American novel from any quarter ; or they become entirely satisfied, that the author of the *Spy* is a very vulgar writer ; or, without wholly prejudging the matter, they suffer their sensibilities to be so utterly shocked at some little indelicacy, or awkwardness, or inelegance, which is likely enough to occur in the ten first pages, that they throw down the book in disgust, long before the author has arranged those preliminaries, which he esteems necessary by way of groundwork, and which are apt to be somewhat dull with the most vigorous and imaginative writers. But let him take up one of these tales, not as a subject of perpetual comparison with the Great Unknown, but for the *bonâ fide* purpose of suffering his imagination to be amused with scenes of fictitious life ; let him read, as a child would read, for the sake of the action, rather than the argument or the style, and busy himself about disentangling the thread of the narrative, and watching the fortunes of the actors, instead of philosophizing on their character or criticising their conversation (all which we take to be a clear usurpation of our own province), and we will venture to say, that no such unsophisticated novel reader ever called for his nightcap, until he had arrived at some of those natural resting-places, which every judicious author, consulting equally his readers' health, and his own reputation, will take care to intersperse at proper intervals ; and which, by the way, it is sometimes a fault with our author, that he neglects to provide.

There follow several pages of general considerations, which are valuable as constituting the first detailed American study of Cooper's talent, but which, in spite of their penetration, are too often marred by their patronizing tone.

It is true that the exceptional gifts of Cooper as a story-teller are willingly acknowledged :

The same sort of magical authority over the spirit of romance, which belongs in common to Scott, Radcliffe, Walpole, and our countryman Brown, is, for us at least, possessed by this writer in an eminent degree. Places, for example, familiar to us from our boyhood, and which are now daily before our eyes, thronged with the vulgar associations of real life, are boldly seized upon for scenes of the wildest romance ; and yet our imaginations do not revolt at the incongruity. We land with Lionel on the Long

Wharf of Boston, and, under the guidance of Job Pray, tread its blind alleys, and wind through its crooked streets, the same which we pass daily in our common avocations, with much of the same feeling of adventure, with which we make our way into the Heart of Mid Lothian, or to the Sanctuary of White Friars... In short, we are borne along by the author through a crowd of romantic incidents and marvellous adventures, without stooping from the flight to consider the reality of things as they exist in the same places at the present day. This seems to us no inconsiderable proof of the power of the writer over us and his subject. Indeed, if we are called upon to state what, in our judgment, constitutes the characteristic excellence of this writer, we should say, without hesitation, that it is exhibited in the rapidity of his incidents, the vividness of his action, and the invention of the machinery of the piece, by which we mean all that answers in the modern novel as a substitute for the mythological divinities of the ancient epopeia, or the giants and enchanters, fairies and weird sisters of Runic poetry and the elder romance ; those subtle agents, bordering upon the preternatural, who weave, and, at pleasure, unravel the mysteries of the plot, and effect such surprises of the imagination as are essential to its dramatic effect. It is the creation and adaptation of a kind of machinery, which may be adequate to its objects, original in its character, and yet within the narrowed limits of modern probability, that stretch to the utmost the inventive faculties of the novelist ; and our author has uniformly succeeded in producing something far enough from faultless, but sufficient to answer this great end.

Cooper's defects, however, seem to be emphasized with a certain gusto.

He is first found deficient in the description of the passions and sentiments :

On the other hand, we do not find that he describes with great effect the secret workings of the passions of the human heart ; or that he moves our affections, by any other than mere external agents, and such commonly as are calculated to excite no softer or more sympathetic emotion than terror or surprise...

The tender passion of course fills an important space in these tales ; as where does it not ? But we never fall in love with the heroine ourselves, nor can we, for our lives, conceive why any

one else should ; and we cannot bring ourselves to sympathize in her sweet sorrows, unless we perceive that she is about to be scalped, or is menaced with some other enormous bodily harm.

As regards character-drawing, the upper class characters and the historical personages are severely dealt with :

The fictitious characters, which figure in the several scenes, are various enough, and show a great range of observation. Of whatever class, if not too much given to talking, they are commonly spirited and well sustained ; and we are even very happy to converse with such of them as do not profess to belong to the upper circles. But the moment we set foot in a fashionable drawing room, we find the gentry there so abominably stiff in their manners, and with so much vulgar good breeding, and so dull, or flippant, or affected in their discourse, that we are heartily glad to escape from elegant society, and take a walk with our author into the woods, or step over to the neighbouring inn, where we are very likely to meet with somebody who can talk to the purpose in his own way.

Real personages are also occasionally introduced ; but we do not think they add much to the interest of these tales, which have but slender merit as pieces of historical painting, so far as individual characters are concerned...

Mr. Cooper has done little in this way. His great attempt, that of Washington, in the *Spy*, was a miserable failure. Paul Jones, in the *Pilot*, can scarcely be called a portrait ; and the slight sketches in *Lionel Lincoln* are by no means touched with a master's hand, and give, we apprehend, but faint representations of their originals.

Not even as a landscape painter is Cooper entirely safe from Gardiner's criticisms :

The descriptions of natural scenery, which abound in some of these productions, are highly picturesque, and full of striking characteristics of the wild American landscape. They prove that the author has studied for himself in the great school of nature. But he succeeds best in imitating her extravagant and gigantic features. He chooses to paint upon the grand scale, and with a bold outline ; and the numberless little beauties, which serve to

fill up, and soften, and adorn the real scene, are wholly overlooked. His tendency is always to exaggerate. He aims at something striking and overwhelming ; and in the attempt often becomes confused. We find ourselves in the midst of huge rocks, and overhanging woods, and tumbling cataracts, with a great mist, and a great noise, and we are utterly unable to settle the relative positions of these objects, so as to form any distinct picture from them in the mind.

Truly, Gardiner might have subscribed without hesitation to the critical principles set forth in the *New Haven Christian Spectator* (24), à propos of the *Pilot* and other « Imitation Waverley Novels » !

Our readers have seen by this time, that we are not of the number of those who make a principle of praising every American book, good or bad, for the sake of encouraging American literature. We wish well to the literary character of our country and we rejoice in its rapid improvement. But we doubt whether the literature of the United States will advance more speedily to a point of high respectability if « Every dunce whose fingers itch to write » is to be daubed, as soon as his book comes forth, with the untempered mortar of an indiscriminating praise, than it will if the book that deserves applause receives it, and the book that has no merit is neglected or condemned. We believe that the growth of our literature will be more healthful, if not more rapid, when reviewers and declaimers shall let alone what is to be, and apply themselves to render due justice to what is. It were as wise to mark out the path of an unborn meteor, as to describe the orbit in which genius shall move. When genius appears among us, we shall know it ; for it will need no declaimer to puff it into notice, and no reviewer to direct its aim. When genius appears, it will shine with its own glory — it will follow its own direction ; and till it appear, let us wait in patience for its coming.

(24) Cf. February 1825, pp. 89-90.

ENGLAND

The literary reputation of the « Author of Precaution » seems to have been greater in England than in America. If no British reviewer sang his praises quite so loud as the New York critic who preferred *Precaution* to Maturin's *Melmoth*, the favourable comments in periodicals of good standing were certainly more numerous in England. This fact is all the more creditable to Cooper as Colburn's reprint of *Precaution* was reviewed as a genuine English work, and therefore judged solely on its own merits. It is also worthy of remark that the young novelist was considered particularly happy in the delineation of character.

Though the English edition of the *Spy* was advertised as « by the Author of Precaution », and though the first French review of the same work stated that it was attributed to an English writer, Fanny Wright, the earliest British criticisms we have found make no mistake as to the nationality of the author. On the contrary they generally insist on the patriotic tone of the new novel and — with the exception of the *New Edinburgh Review* — they show themselves very broad-minded on this delicate subject.

From the very outset the author of the *Spy* is classed as an American rival of the Great Unknown, who, though falling far short of his model, is nevertheless decidedly in advance of all the imitators of the « Wizard of the North ». In the words of the *Gazette of Fashion and Magazine of the Fine Arts* for April 6, 1822 : « he has gone nearer than any other imitator to shake the laurels of the Caledonian Apollo of novel writers » (1).

(1) Cf. pp. 163-64,

The *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review* for July 6 (2) signalizes itself by omitting this almost unavoidable comparison with the author of *Waverley*, and by saying instead that the author of the *Spy* « has proved himself a worthy successor » of Brockden Brown, « the celebrated American novelist ». This review is also remarkable for its exceedingly warm praise of the *Spy* : « an admirable tale », « one of the best novels that we have met with ».

The *New Edinburgh Review* for October (3), in addition to finding fault, as we have said, with the patriotism of the *Spy*, is naturally anxious to include the author among the numerous imitators of the *Scotch* novels. Its tone is very patronizing, for it declares that the *Spy* « must not be measured by the gigantic standard of such compositions appealed to » in Great Britain. Still the American writer is not exactly a copyist : « Although our present author, in no particular, borrows the actual produce of the Unknown Novelist's labours, there is a likeness in the implements and the culture, which shows that a good example has been followed. »

The fact that the *Pioneers* was not an historical novel did not put an end to such comparisons. Sometimes, as in the case of the *Monthly Literary Register* for March 1823 (4), they were made in a somewhat unfriendly spirit. This periodical, thinking it necessary to react against a tendency of British reviewers « to exalt foreign [i. e. American] at the expense of native talent », was evidently pleased to point out that the *Pioneers* was not entirely original (5). But the majority of British periodicals were more and more inclined to view Cooper's imitation in its true light, and to consider him as the most worthy rival of the Great Unknown and as the most representative American author :

Putting Geoffrey Crayon aside — who, by the way, is as little of an American in all his writings, save one, as we ourselves

(2) Cf. pp. 421-23.

(3) Cf. p. 345.

(4) Cf. pp. 218-20.

(5) *Vide infra* the chapter on the *Pioneers*.

— the author of the *Pioneers* is the most original and the best author that the United States of America have produced. Besides possessing many requisites which fit him for the vocation of a novelist, he has had the discretion and the good taste to seek the materials of his tales in those scenes and characters of his native country which have been hitherto unexplored, and which add to their intrinsic attractions the rare charm of perfect novelty...

It [the *Pioneers*] is in every respect an imitation of the author of *Waverley* ; and if Mr. Cooper is beneath the Great Unknown in information, in polish, and in skill, he approaches him nearer than any of his other imitators, in originality of subject, and in the spirit with which he has executed his task. (*British Magazine, or Miscellany of Polite Literature*, April 1823, pp. 65 and 81).

In our review of *Bracebridge Hall*, we took occasion to notice the *Spy*. We regarded it as a production of very high merit — by far the best of the multitudes which have been put forth on the model, and in imitation, of the Great Unknown. When we say, however, that the *Spy* is written on the model of the *Waverley* novels — we would by no means be understood to signify that the imitation is servile or even close... There are, indeed, some parts of the *Spy*, which would be no discredit to the pen of even the author of *Waverley*. (*Album*, May 1823, p. 155.)

The novels and romances published in America for some years past, if they are greatly inferior in number, are certainly not much so in excellence, to those which have issued from our own press. With the exception of Sir Walter Scott, perhaps there has been no British novel writer for some years past at all equal to Mr. Cooper, the author of the *Spy*, and the *Pioneers*. (*Literary Museum*, October 18, 1823, p. 657).

In 1824 the *Retrospective Review* (6) was the first English periodical which attempted to characterize Cooper's talent. This was done in a nominal review of Brown's *Arthur Mervyn* and a comparison between the two American novelists naturally ensued :

Mr. Cooper, the author of *The Pioneers*, is a young man of

high and undoubted talent. There is a freshness and vivid beauty in some of his scenes, which may challenge competition with *any* writer of the present day. He is much more dramatic than Brown; but he has not the same power over the passions, and scarcely the same burning and impetuous strength of narration. He deals pleasantly with men, and brings out their peculiarities, their vices, their foibles, and graceful distinctions; while Brown, on the other hand, is content with the passions alone; but these he traces to their root, or spreads abroad in all their florid grandeur. The fault of both writers is that they make too much for *points*; and it is more particularly the fault of Mr. Cooper. His spirit lies tame sometimes for half a volume, and then springs up fevered and irritable, and pushes an incident to the very verge of our belief.

Upon the appearance of the *Pilot*, in February 1824, British critics were clear-sighted enough to understand that the usual parallel with Scott had to be replaced by a comparison between Cooper and Smollett. It is true that many of them did not attempt to differentiate the two sea-novelists and that no one at the time realized that Cooper had actually written the first genuine sea-novel. Still Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine* (7) saw that there was « nothing of the copyist » in Cooper's work, and the *Ladies' Monthly Museum* (8) found in it « the stamp of original genius », while Miss MITFORD (9), and especially the *Edinburgh Scotsman* (10), did not hesitate to proclaim Cooper's superiority over Smollett.

With *Lionel Lincoln*, of course, the comparison with Scott again became unavoidable, and the numerous defects of the work enabled such tory and anti-american periodicals as the *Literary Gazette* to have a fling at the American Scott :

Mr. Cooper, the writer of these novels, is placed by acclamation in a high rank in his country's literature; and he appears to

(7) Cf. March. 1824, pp. 123-24.

(8) *Ibid.*, pp. 158-59.

(9) Cf. letter to Sir William Elford (March 5, 1824), in vol. 2, p. 77, of Miss Mitford's *Life* by A. L. L'ESTRANGE.

(10) The article was reprinted in the *New York Mirror* for December 4, 1824, p. 151.

consider himself to be quite as clever a fellow as the good natured world gives him credit for being. But this is not very extraordinary in an American, or man of the New World, since it is a very common idea among men of the Old, who ought to know better. But notwithstanding every opinion on the matter, including his own, Mr. Cooper is not equal to the Great Unknown, whom he imitates (at a long distance), and tries to ridicule with marvellous small success. (11)

Other periodicals, however, do not seem to have considered the novel as an inferior production, and the *Liverpool Nepenthes* (12), for instance, hails the author as « the nearest representative of the Great Unknown that has ventured to tread in the same line, and to attempt the same manner of description as the Scottish Shakespeare. »

Some adversaries of Scott, like the *Monthly Critical Gazette* (13), even went so far as to deplore the fact that Cooper should have committed « a sort of suicide » by neglecting to follow the bent of his original genius and by betraying his intention to compete with Scott — a bad model — in his *Legends of the Thirteen Republics* :

...unfortunately for America, for England, and for himself, [Cooper has] followed the example of their author [Walter Scott], and has compounded a literary mixture of truth and fiction, a jumble of history and romance, after the manner of Sir Walter and produced an heterogeneous composition which must inevitably tend to bewilder, if not to mislead the reader's mind upon important points of history. But what is still more to be lamented in the instance before us is its tendency to rekindle political animosities in the people of America against Great Britain, which the best interests of both countries, no less than the duties and feelings of humanity, require to be buried in oblivion.

Whether we are to have a series of these American historical Romances we are not quite sure ; but our fears are actually excited by the words « *Legends of the Thirteen Republics* », which form a general title to the present volumes, with the following

(11) Cf. March 5, 1825, p. 149.

(12) Cf. March 12, 1825, p. 68.

(13) Cf. April 1825, pp. 457-58.

motto, « *Why I will fight with him on this theme until my eyelids will no longer wag.* » We cannot help construing this into a sort of challenge to Sir Walter, and a determination on the part of Mr. Cooper to present the world with a succession of Romances of the American Republic from the year 1774, at which period the fictitious adventures of *Lionel Lincoln*, and the *actual Leaguer of Boston*, described in the present work, commence. How much time or labour it may require to make this author's « eyelids wag », we have no means of judging ; but as these three volumes carry us forward only one year, in point of time, some conjecture of the number of volumes he will have to write, ere he arrives at the conclusion of the American war, may be formed...

It is not, therefore, because Mr. Cooper has written an Anglo-American historical Romance with the warm feelings of an American that we censure him ; it is not his patriotism or his principles, but his taste that we condemn. We lament exceedingly that he has been induced, from any motive whatever, to commit a sort of suicide upon his own literary reputation, by smothering on this occasion the original genius with which nature has gifted him, in order to become a servile copyist of what has ever been considered and proclaimed by us to be a bad model.

As for *Blackwood's* review of *Lionel Lincoln* (14), it was written by Cooper's countryman, JOHN NEAL, and must have proved rather bewildering to many British readers, owing to the sarcastic manner in which Cooper's literary career was outlined :

Though Mr. Cooper's book is unworthy of him, still we cannot be very severe with it ; because, after all, if it be not a real North American story, as we have said before, it is very like one ; if not exactly that for which we have been longing, it is the shadow, and perhaps the forerunner of it...

Mr. Cooper is a dwarf, to be sure ; a dwarf, when he goes playing about, on all fours, in the shadow of pyramids : or a-tiptoe, among the over-thrown pillars of another age ; « bobbing for whales », on the lee-side of a bridge — a giant's causeway, in truth, over which the men of that revolution (whereof he is

(14) Cf. September 1825, pp. 324-26.

now prattling, as if it were the work of a day ; the stuff that novels are made of — a pretty incident — a scuffle — a row, worth taking up, in a popular story ; worth alluding to ;) — over which they travelled, year after year, *like* giants, to the noise of earthquake and battle — year after year — till they came to a place where the foundations of a great empire were laid, (an empire spreading from shore to shore), not, as he may suppose, by the light of squibs and crackers, to the sound of threepenny whistles, pewter trumpets, or ivory castanets ; but with prayer and worship ; here, by the light of a rejoicing sky, crowded with stars, or blazing with broad, clear sunshine ; there, to the noise of great bells in the earth, or cannon, or heavy thunder, perhaps — in the dead of night — or the loud roaring of the sea.

Cooper has done much, although he has done it, like a boy, without well knowing what he was about. He has broken up a new quarry ; or broken his way *to* it, rather — a quarry which will never be exhausted ; a quarry, which, till the « *SPY* » appeared in his country, had never been approached, or disturbed. — He touched a spring, while he was half asleep, one day, rolling about, in the great unvisited store-house of North-American riches ; overwearied with playing marbles there, in the hot sunshine of public favour, with a people gazing at him, a whole nation, for spectators. The touch electrified him — he was unprepared for it. He started up, « *thrilling to the bone* » — half crazy with astonishment, while the rocky doors flew open, with a great noise. He could not endure the sound, or the sight ; so, he ran off — scampered away — cleared out, like Aladdin ; freighted with treasure, accidentally gathered in a fit of childish curiosity — wealth plucked, by handfuls — huge, over-grown jewelry, which he mistook, one day, for a strange fruit, another for stained glass. But although Mr. Cooper was not aware of the value of that which he carried away, for a while, nor of that which he left behind, others were ; others, who caught a glimpse of the brief, bright, momentary, hap-hazard revelation ; others, who are at work now ; others, who will not be interfered with.

Mr. Cooper himself has gone back, after a long interval, for another peep. It is too late for him though ; he is the day after the fair. He has taken too much breath ; lost a great deal too much time. Those who are now at work, will not be frightened away by noise, or flurried by anything. They will go deep —

very deep — into the very foundations of that, which they have begun to explore...

He did much, though it was by accident ; as we have said before, and will continue to say ; for, if he had known the value of that mine, which he blundered upon, while searching for base plebeian earth, (a little cash), would he have gone away, and left others to work it ? or would he have staid away so long ? or would he have gone back to it now, with such a doubtful air, and such a sad misgiving of the heart ?...

Yet Mr. Cooper is now there. He has « rushed in, where angels fear to tread ; » gone barefooted, perhaps ; or slip-shod ; set off, without preparation, to visit a place where the Spirit of revolution broke loose, fifty years ago, tearing his way, from shore to shore, and from sea to sea, like an earthquake ; a place, to which Goliath himself could not go, without wading up to his middle in hot ashes, and lifting a passage for himself, through a world of rubbish — overthrown pillars, and imperial wreck ; a place to which no dwarf will ever penetrate — ever — ever — though he wear sandals of brass, or go, with brazen panoply complete ; or seek for immortality, after the fashion of those, who leap into the fire when there is no other way to obtain it.

Curiously enough, the warm — and at times almost enthusiastic — reception of the *Mohicans* in British literary circles failed to bring Cooper a step nearer to Scott, if we are to believe the critical estimates of the work. A well-disposed periodical like the *Monthly Review* (15) began as follows its detailed study of the *Mohicans* :

The « American novels » have rapidly been acquiring a character quite as distinctive of its kind as that which our great northern magician has created for the narrative fiction of his country. Doubtless, but for the example of the author of *Waverley*, we should never have heard of the *American historical tale*; and nothing would be more absurd than to imagine any equality of inventive genius, between the gifted spirit who has originated the most delightful class of modern romance, and the most successful of his imitators on either side of the Atlantic. But very considerable praise is still due to more than one of the American

(15) Cf. June 1926, pp. 22-23.

novelists for the tact and good judgment which have led them to borrow no more than the rules of their art, and to apply them to the fabrication of materials which were their own proper and incontestible possession. It is their particular merit to have seen, that the neglected records of their early colonial and of their later national history abounded in a wild and unusual cast of romance... For in America a single age of revolution and independence has changed the whole aspect of society, and thrown back the occurrences of a mere half century past into the distant obscurity and romantic light of antiquity. This advantage the American novelists were not slow to perceive ; and they have availed themselves skilfully of it.

The style and expression of their painting are those of the author of *Waverley* : but the subjects and characters, and grouping of their stories, are their own. Their productions are not mere bungling copies of their great master, but rather pieces executed only after his best manner, and often with a free and spirited design.

Among these American novelists, the author of the volumes before us figures the Coryphæus of the band. Mr. Cooper — for like other *anonymous* writers his name is well known — is really a person of very considerable and even extraordinary talents. Being originally bred to the sea, he served as a midshipman in the American navy ; and this early pursuit of a profession of danger has ministered to the strength of his vigorous imagination. His *Pilot* is unquestionably the best romance of nautical adventure which our times have produced ; and there is one scene in that tale — a sea-fight — which, if he had never written another line, would alone distinguish him for a master of powerful description. Many passages from his other novels might be cited to support this reputation ; but our present business is only with the narrative before us.

One month later the *British Critic* (16), in a general review of Cooper's novels to date — with the sole exception of *Precaution* — also insisted on Cooper's indebtedness to Scott notwithstanding the originality of his subjects :

If not superior in natural genius to the author of « Seventy-

Six » [17], Mr. Cooper far excels him in all points of judgment and good taste. Possessing a new and a wide field of interest in the manners and legends of his native country, and the strongly marked features of the wild tribes who are now gradually disappearing from its forests, he has succeeded in preserving a character of originality, while forming his style almost professedly on that of the author of « Waverley ». Like him Mr. Cooper discards all unnecessary sentiment, and makes no more use of love than is necessary for the conduct of his plot.

« Happy's the wooing.

That's not long a doing ».

If he does not possess the power remarkable in his great model, of imparting by a single word, look, or incident, a high and heroic character to the passion of love, he shows the same good judgment in keeping it subservient to the arduous adventures and the real business of life, an art but little known fifty years ago, and generally speaking, he appears to have caught from the study of the Waverley novels that vigorous and manly tone of feeling, which perhaps is their most peculiar trait, and to have learnt to apply those principles of contrasted light and shade, of mirth and gravity, which most truly answer to the checkered character of human existence. We rise from the perusal of the American, as of the Scottish novelist, reminded that man is a being of as hardy and noble a conformation as the oak, from which poets tell us he once drew his subsistence, and like it, made to develop his native qualities best while struggling with the storm...

Observing, as we cannot help doing, an incipient tendency in more than one author of rising talent, to revive the forgotten taste for dismal dolours, to describe the world as a howling wilderness of hard hearted oppression and hopeless love, made for the refined to bewail themselves in, and yelp, like beaten hounds, under the lash of disappointment, we cannot bestow too marked praise upon a style of writing, which, without the slightest tinge of callous optimism, exhibits the real stuff that human life is made of, and tends to keep the reader in love and charity with his own kind.

Sometimes, it is true, as in the case of the *Literary Chron-*

icle (18), the comparison with Scott was carefully avoided, but this did not seem to imply that the writer was at all ready to consider the American novelist as the equal of the great Scotchman :

Mr. Cooper, the author of the work before us, and of many excellent creations in romantic literature, is a native of America ; and proud indeed may that country be of him. Casting from his fervent mind the trammels of commonplace histories, he has illustrated the manners of his countrymen, and ably has he performed his task. The kindlings of his imagination have been tempered with truth, the natural properties of the soil which gave him birth ably described, and Nature in her various hues admirably portrayed. Some few years since he produced his first work — *Precaution* ; it gave hopes of better things, which were realised by the appearance of the *Spy of the Neutral Ground*: this was succeeded by the *Pilot*, and other works, which have raised his name to a height of celebrity, gratifying to himself, and honourable to his country. We know not of any series of tales so successively interesting as those which have proceeded from our author's pen, and with regard to the narrative now before us, it not only fully supports his fame, but it possibly increases it. There is a delightful freshness in his writings, which claims at once attention and respect, and interesting scenes and vivid descriptions, follow each other so quickly, that we shut the volumes lamenting their briefness.

The *Quarterly Review* did not even condescend to rank Cooper immediately after its founder :

If we except two or three of the works of Mr. Cooper, we do not believe that any of these imitations [of Walter Scott] will be remembered a few years hence ; and yet we are far from considering that American writer as the ablest man that has imitated the great novelist of our time. His superiour success is owing to the superiority of his materials ; he has employed a style of delineation which he could never have invented, upon a fresh field, and, which is of still higher importance, on a field of manners and feelings familiar to his own observation. His *Spy*,

Pioneers, &c., may be classed therefore, though *post longum intervalum*, with *Waverley* (19).

MISS MITFORD alone, in her often quoted letter to Hayden, seems to have felt that, with the *Mohicans*, Cooper had truly reached Scott's own level and thus furnished a striking example of the achievements which might be expected of American literature in years to come :

Have you read Cooper's novel, « *The Last of the Mohicans* » ? I like it better than any of Scott's, except the three first and the « *Heart of Mid-Lothian* » ; and it interests me more even than those, as giving a true and new picture of a new and great people. How wonderfully America is rising in the scale of intellect ...

If you have not read the American novels, do. Depend on it that America will succeed us as Rome did Athens ; and it is a comfort to think that by their speaking the same beautiful language, Shakespeare and Milton will not be buried in the dust of a scholar's library, but live and breathe in after ages as they do now to us (20).

(19) This passage is to be found in a review of Scott's *Lives of the Novelists* (September, 1826, p. 377).

As for the *Edinburgh*, even as late as April 1835, it was not ready to place Cooper side by side with Scott, and this in spite of the fact that it recognized the American novelist's mastery on the ocean and in the primeval forest :

« Has America ever yet produced a work of original genius in literature, which has not instantly found admirers on this side of the Atlantic, as enthusiastic — though perhaps a little more discriminating, than at home ? ...

Where, we would ask, has all that is really excellent in Cooper's novels, been more warmly admired ? The empire of the sea has been conceded to him by acclamation ; in the lonely desert, or untrodden prairie, among the savage Indians, or scarcely less savage settlers, we equally acknowledge his dominion. « Within that circle none dares walk but he ». But surely all this was not to blind us to the undeniable fact, that he who was a mighty magician within his circle, was but a very common person, nay, somewhat of the mountebank beyond it ; that when taken from the quarter-deck or the desert, « Where wild in woods the noble savage ran », and placed on *terra firma* among civilized society, — particularly where he ventured a descent on the shores of Great Britain, — he sank rather below the mark of a second-rate novelist ...

Cooper, in short, is the master but of one element ; Scott moves with grace and security in all. America has reason certainly to be proud of her son ; but if she persist in placing him beside his great original, it will be long before Europe be disposed to ratify the judgment. » (pp. 23-24).

(20) Cf. A.-G. L'ESTRANGE's *Life of Miss Mitford*, London 1870, vol. 2, p. 226. The letter is dated July 11, 1826.

FRANCE

Precaution having waited for a French translator until 1825, it was the *Spy* which made Cooper's reputation in France. The *Miroir des Spectacles, des Lettres, des Mœurs et des Arts* for September 1, 1822 reviewed it very favourably and considered as a merit the fact that it recalled the Scotch Novels in some particulars : « Les caractères des principaux personnages et ceux de quelques personnages secondaires sont dessinés avec une piquante originalité qui rappelle la manière de Walter Scott ». Unfortunately the reviewer was deceived as to the real author of the book : « On l'attribue à Miss Wright déjà connue dans le monde littéraire par un voyage aux Etats-Unis, qui eut en son temps beaucoup de succès ».

This error was of course avoided by the following critics, who spoke highly of the talent of « Monsieur Cooper, Américain », and found nothing to blame in his imitation of the Scotch novelist. On August 3, 1823, the *Pandore* (p. 4), announced as follows the publication of the *Pioneers* :

Le libraire Charles Gosselin, éditeur des *Œuvres de Sir Walter Scott*, publiera dans les premiers jours d'août, un nouveau roman de M. Cooper, Américain, auquel nous devons déjà l'intéressante production de l'*Espion*. Ce nouveau roman a pour titre : *Les Pionniers, ou les sources du Susquehannah*. Il paraît que M. Cooper veut, comme sir Walter Scott, nous faire connaître les mœurs de sa patrie. Si *les Pionniers* nous intéressent autant que l'ont fait les héros de son premier ouvrage, et si le *Pilote*, roman inédit du même auteur, répond à ses aînés, M. Cooper méritera bientôt d'être surnommé le *Barde du Nouveau Monde*.

A few months later Charles Nodier was inclined to place

Harvey Birch on a par with the finest characters in Scott's novels : « L'Espion égale peut-être en originalité ses conceptions les plus habilement soutenues. » (1) In January 1824, however, the *Revue Encyclopédique* (2) wished that Cooper had shown himself more original :

Depuis un an ou deux, l'Amérique a produit plusieurs auteurs distingués. M. Washington Irving a été le premier à s'élancer dans la carrière romantique ; plusieurs de ses compatriotes l'y ont suivi. M. Cooper, dans l'*Espion* et les *Pionniers*, s'est montré l'élève d'un grand maître, sir Walter Scott ; mais il rappelle trop souvent dans ses meilleurs tableaux qu'il n'est qu'imitateur.

Three months later, the publication of the French translation of the *Pilot* compelled that same periodical to predict that the disciple would soon rival his master (3) :

On peut dire, à la louange de M. Cooper, que, grâce à lui, sa patrie n'aura pas long-tems à envier aux îles britanniques leur célèbre Walter Scott, dont il reproduit souvent la manière pittoresque et la féconde imagination.

A similar note was sounded in the *Quotidienne* for April 12, and in the *Annales de la Littérature et des Arts* :

Un romancier qui marche sur les traces de sir Walter Scott vient de confirmer toutes les espérances qu'avaient fait concevoir l'*Espion* et les *Pionniers*. Un nouveau roman de cet auteur, portant pour titre le *Pilote*... ne serait pas désavoué par l'ingénieux écrivain qui nous a donné les *Puritains d'Ecosse* (sic), (*La Quotidienne*, p. 4).

Déjà *L'Espion* et les *Pionniers*, ou les *Sources du Susquehannah* avoient obtenu un succès mérité. Ces deux romans annonçoient un élève de Sir Walter Scott, digne de marcher sur les traces de son maître, et lui-même original. La publication du *Pilote* a rempli où plutôt surpassé toutes les espérances que l'on avoit pu concevoir. (*Annales*, tomes 16, p. 420. The article is signed Ernest de Bl. xxx.)

(1) Cf. *Journal des Débats*, November 21, 1823.

(2) Cf. p. 136, in an announcement of Paulding's *Koningsmarke* signed L. S. B.

(3) Cf. April, 1824, p. 209. The article is signed M.-A. J.

Finally, going a step further, the *Globe* for March 12, 1825, considered the author of the *Pilot* as worthy of both Smollett and Scott (4).

Lionel Lincoln, of course, detracted somewhat from Cooper's growing fame, and the *Globe* for April 21, 1825, while judging the battle scenes worthy of « Scott himself », advised Cooper to study his model — and Shakespeare — even more closely (5) :

Que M. Cooper étudie sans cesse Shakespeare et Walter Scott, ces deux grands maîtres de la tragédie et du roman historiques : il peint déjà presque aussi bien qu'eux ; mais qu'ils lui apprennent à nouer son intrigue dans les entrailles de l'époque où elle se passe. Ils pourront l'instruire encore de l'art de faire penser ses personnages sous l'influence de l'esprit qui régnait au temps où il les fait agir... M Cooper a un véritable talent, et le titre de seul imitateur heureux de Scott, qu'on lui décerne unanimement, mérite bien qu'il cherche à corriger ses défauts.

The following year, however, the success of the *Mohicans* encouraged most French reviewers to maintain, not only that Cooper was worthy of being called the American Scott, but that he was also an original genius :

L'histoire des Etats-Unis à l'époque où ces contrées, habitées par des tribus sauvages, furent envahies par les Européens, vient de fournir à M. Cooper, surnommé à juste titre le Walter Scott Américain, bien que s'il imite parfois l'auteur des Puritains, ce soit toujours avec l'indépendance du génie, et que ses imitations portent l'empreinte d'une création aussi hardie que brillante, la matière d'un nouvel ouvrage qu'on publie aujourd'hui sous le titre du *Dernier des Mohicans*. (*Le Corsaire*, May 5, 1826).

Si quelquefois on a pu accuser le romancier américain de trop imiter Walter Scott, ici du moins il est original. (*Le Globe*, May 18, 1826, p. 336).

Sa manière est évidemment celle de Scott, à qui il emprunte jusqu'à ses épigraphes ; et pourtant elle ne manque ni de charme

(4) *Vide infra*, the chapter on the *Pilot*.

(5) Cf. pp. 487-88. The article is signed E. D.,

ni même d'une certaine aisance. Les scènes qu'il peint sont si nouvelles... que l'originalité du sujet rend moins sensible l'imitation des formes. (*Le Globe*, May 25, 1826, pp. 351-52) (6).

M. Cooper est le Walter Scott de l'Amérique ; ses romans, inspirés par ceux du célèbre écossais, se rattachent toujours à l'histoire de son pays. (*La Revue Encyclopédique*, June 1826, p. 703. The article is signed F. D.).

For political reasons this point of view was evidently carried to extremes in the first detailed study of Cooper's work published by the *Globe* (7), the reviewer going so far as to extol the republican novelist at the expense of the tory baronet, and of taking Irving to task for having paid a sort of feudal homage to his mother-country :

Ce n'est pas sans hésiter que nous plaçons M. W. Irving parmi les littérateurs américains. Né, il est vrai, dans le Nouveau Monde, il a brigué dans la Vieille Angleterre sa naturalisation littéraire. Méconnaissant le champ neuf et riche ouvert à son talent dans sa patrie, il s'en est allé glaner péniblement sur les traces de l'école du *Spectateur*, et a trouvé le moyen de passer encore pour suranné dans ces routes battues. Quelques esquisses nationales, trop voisines de la caricature et d'un intérêt par trop municipal, lui avaient déjà fait un nom ; mais il s'est empressé d'en aller faire une sorte d'hommage féodal à la métropole suzeraine. Cette servilité littéraire semblait justifier les mépris dont la presse britannique se plaisait à accabler la colonie affranchie et les peintures insultantes qu'elle en présentait à l'Europe...

Ce fut alors que M. Cooper révéla son talent. Ce fut aussi le succès vraiment populaire de ses premiers ouvrages qui révéla

(6) The article is signed O. (i. e. DUVERGIER DE HAURANNE according to G. D. MORRIS, p. 16.)

With regard to the use of mottoes, it should be borne in mind that Cooper spoke of it as follows in his famous review of Lockhart's *Life of Scott* : « We have known persons, however, so much bewitched with this transcendent power, as to fancy that Scott wrote the first novel the world ever saw ; and to this day, very many persons suppose he was the introducer of the custom of placing mottoes at the heads of chapters. » (Cf. *Knickerbocker Magazine*, December 1838, p. 364).

(7) Cf. June 19, 1827, pp. 174-75. Signed F. A. S.

à notre public une littérature américaine. Nous nous réjouissons que ces ouvrages soient des romans, car nous regardons le roman comme la forme littéraire la plus raisonnable et la plus féconde.

On a appelé M. Cooper un imitateur de W. Scott, on a dit qu'il s'est inspiré des nouvelles écossaises. Nous avouons ne comprendre aucunement la base de ce jugement devenu assez bannal (sic). Nous ne voyons pas beaucoup de ressemblance entre les mœurs toutes nouvelles qu'a décrites d'après nature l'auteur républicain et les mœurs féodales qu'a exhumées de ses vieilles chroniques le baronnet écossais...

Si maintenant nous voulons établir une comparaison entre les deux romanciers, non point comme entre l'original et la copie, mais comme entre deux puissants rivaux, nous dirions que sous plus d'un rapport nous préférons l'Américain à l'Écossais. Il nous semble que dans la grave disposition où se trouvent maintenant les esprits, quelque forme littéraire qu'adopte l'écrivain, mais surtout s'il choisit l'histoire ou le roman, qui est aussi une histoire, on a le droit de demander et l'on demande en effet de la *partialité* ; non pas en falsifiant ou travestissant les faits, les opinions et les caractères, mais en les jugeant, en prenant parti dans la grande lutte qui préoccupe si fortement la race humaine ; on demande que quelque idée morale préside dans ses pages, que quelques convictions y répandent de la dignité. Or, nous le demandons, quelle idée morale préside aux écrits du romancier écossais, à moins que ce ne soit cette idée de tolérance à la Voltaire, fondée sur une indifférence, sur un scepticisme universels, vices de l'esprit mortels à tout ce qu'il y a dans l'homme d'enthousiaste et de grand ?... On prierait volontiers le baronnet tory d'arborer franchement son drapeau, quelque impopulaire et illibéral qu'il puisse être, quelque difficile qu'il soit de se persuader qu'un homme d'un tel génie suive de bonne foi une bannière si décriée. De nos jours plus que jamais est applicable à l'écrivain la définition, au premier abord assez bizarre, que Quintilien donne de l'orateur : *VIR BONUS bene scribendi (dicendi) peritus*. Or, on sait que, dans sa vie *politique*, sir W. Scott n'est pas le *vir bonus* de Quintilien.

Un tel reproche n'atteindra point les romans de M. Cooper. L'auteur y est constamment citoyen et philosophe. Partout on retrouve une raison exempte de préjugés, un sentiment moral éclairé, une foi profonde à la liberté, à l'égalité, aux idées religieuses, à la patrie, à la dignité de la nature humaine, à tout ce

qu'elle possède de bon et de généreux. On reconnaît enfin partout le noble type du républicain américain.

It seems therefore that the average French opinion is better represented by the corresponding study of the *Revue Encyclopédique* for November 1827 (8).

The critic — who signs himself B. J. — willingly recognizes that Cooper has proved the most successful of Scott's rivals, and that his subjects are original. But Cooper is said to have borrowed too much from Scott's methods, so that he has copied the very faults of his model, thus, to some extent, spoiling his own gifts :

C'est celui que la faveur publique semble placer le plus près de l'auteur écossais ; c'est celui qui paraît en effet exceller par l'originalité et la vérité de ses tableaux, celui dont j'estimerais encore plus les productions, s'il n'avait pris à tâche de copier son modèle jusque dans les parties les plus répréhensibles de ses ouvrages. La suite de cet article montrera que les qualités du célèbre romancier américain lui sont propres, tandis que ses défauts appartiennent en grande partie à celui qu'il imite. (pp.349-350).

Cooper's gifts are first defined as follows :

Les qualités qui distinguent généralement les romans de M. Cooper sont les suivantes : un intérêt toujours croissant et égal à celui que Walter Scott et Wander (sic) Velde ont su répandre dans leurs ouvrages ; l'observation exacte des localités, et une vérité constamment soutenue dans les caractères ; enfin, une peinture des passions tellement vive qu'il fait toujours partager au lecteur celles qu'il prête à ses personnages. (pp. 354-55.)

In addition, towards the end of the article, Cooper is allowed to excel in the delineation of such gigantic and heroic characters as Captain Lawton and Long Tom Coffin, and even in the portraits of certain heroines :

...ces figures où les auteurs semblent avoir voulu montrer ce

(8) Cf. pp. 346-60.

que peut devenir l'homme, lorsque ses facultés, fortement excitées et dirigées vers un même but, sont encore favorisées par une taille ou une force peu ordinaires : tels sont, dans l'*Espion*, et dans le *Pilote*, le capitaine de dragons Lawton et le contre-maître Tom-le-Long : ces personnages sont de véritables créations, et le rôle important qu'ils jouent ne permet pas de les regarder comme des hors-d'œuvre.

Il faudrait y ajouter, dans un autre genre, quelques portraits de femmes, qui tous se distinguent par la grâce caractéristique du sexe, jointe tantôt à une fermeté de résolution peu commune, tantôt à une douceur ou à une faiblesse que nous ne rencontrons que trop. A cet égard même, on pourrait peut-être signaler dans les ouvrages du romancier américain, un peu de monotonie ; car il oppose presque toujours deux sœurs ou deux cousines, ou deux amies, dont l'une est la sensibilité même, et l'autre la gaieté personnifiée ; mais ces tableaux ont tant de fraîcheur et tant de grâce, que personne assurément ne sera tenté de lui en faire un reproche. (pp. 359-60).

As for Cooper's defects, they are those usually met with in historical novels.

The first is the exaggerated number of volumes, which calls for an immoderate and unnatural use of the dialogue :

Je mets au premier rang la manie de faire son roman en quatre volumes [9]. On est forcé, pour arriver à ce nombre, d'avoir recours à un usage immodéré des dialogues : on fait converser ses personnages souvent sur des choses qui ne tiennent nullement à l'action, ou pour peindre des caractères ou des ridicules que le lecteur n'a aucun besoin de connaître... Walter Scott a mis à la mode ce moyen d'allonger un livre, et j'ai entendu vanter ces dialogues éternels dont il a rempli ses romans... mais un peu de réflexion aurait dû convaincre que cette confusion de genres n'est pas du tout favorable à la narration. (p. 358.).

The second defect arises from the use of superhuman personages recalling the machinery of epic poems :

Un autre caractère de tous les auteurs qui appartiennent à

(9) While the American editions of Cooper were published in two volumes, the English editions comprized three and the French four volumes.

l'école de Walter Scott, c'est l'emploi de personnages en quelque sorte surnaturels, et qui exercent sur les autres acteurs une influence merveilleuse, qui trop souvent n'est pas expliquée : l'Espion, le Pilote, Lincoln le père, sont des êtres de ce genre. Sous le rapport de l'intérêt, on aurait tort de s'en plaindre ; car nous sommes tous tellement amis du merveilleux... Mais j'avoue que dans un roman destiné à peindre la société au sein de laquelle nous vivons, j'aimerais mieux qu'on ne présentât pas de ces êtres fantastiques, dont l'apparition, même dans un livre, peut produire des impressions dangereuses sur les têtes faibles et sur l'imagination des femmes. (pp. 358-59.)

As for the third and last defect, it is to be found in the use of « bores » :

...non que ces caractères soient blâmables en eux-mêmes, puisqu'ils sont dans la nature, et qu'ils n'ont rien de repoussant ; mais il est trop clair qu'ils sont placés là sans aucune nécessité, seulement pour que les conversations qu'on leur fera tenir, ou les actions ridicules qu'on leur prêtera, allongent encore le volume. (p. 359)

There follows a balanced conclusion, whose sincere and healthy ring is, in our opinion, very creditable to the *Revue Encyclopédique* (10) :

Ces observations prouvent avec quelle impartialité la *Revue Encyclopédique* apprécie les ouvrages dont elle présente l'examen. M. Cooper est l'un des hommes que son beau talent et son noble caractère doivent le plus faire estimer. Nous avons dit, sans restriction, combien nous trouvions à louer dans ses ouvrages ; mais la vérité nous faisait un devoir de relever les défauts qui, selon nous, les déparent quelquefois. Notre franchise même est un hommage rendu à l'écrivain d'un mérite supérieur dont nous avons lu avec un soin consciencieux les admirables productions ; et nous aimons à croire qu'il nous saura gré d'une critique sincère qui seule pouvait donner du prix à nos éloges. (p. 360)

(10) This periodical, liberal in politics, was classical in its literary tastes until 1825. In 1827 its new attitude towards romanticism was therefore becoming quite apparent. Cf. G.-D. MORRIS, pp. 21-22.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing criticisms go far to prove Cooper's contention that he never was « supported by the written, critical opinion » of his own country (1).

It is true that *Precaution* was warmly praised by a New York quarterly, and that Dennie's *Portfolio* gave the *Spy* a hearty welcome, which, by the way, Cooper never forgot (2). It is also true that *Niles' Weekly Register* seized almost every opportunity of extolling Cooper at the expense of the *Great Unknown*. But it remains that, as a rule, the majority of American periodicals did not dare to commit themselves before ascertaining the English verdict on each successive novel, as is particularly evident in the case of the *Spy* and in that of the *Pilot*. In addition the most influential American review, the *North American* — notwithstanding the emphatic declarations of some modern critics on the subject (3) — certainly failed to « encourage » the young novelist, so that Cooper, naturally

(1) See his autobiographical notes in appendix I.

(2) *Vide infra* the chapter on the *Spy*, p. 77.

(3) See F.-L. PATTEE's general article on Cooper in the *American Mercury* for March 1925, p. 293 : « The *North American Review*, the inspired voice of Boston, reviewed it [*The Spy*] at great length and with unqualified praise. This praise now intoxicated Cooper — and his wife... »

With regard to G. PAINE's article on *Cooper and the North American Review* (*Studies in Philology*, October 1931), we believe that, if the author had known Cooper's autobiographical notes, the following sentence would not have been written by him : « The pronounced Americanism of the editors of the *Review*, their demand for a native American literature, and their eagerness to welcome American fiction by new writers, accounts for their favorable criticism of many of James Fenimore Cooper's early novels. » (p. 271).

LOUNSBURY was far closer to the truth when he said (p. 60) : « Towards Cooper it struggled in a feeble way to be just, but for all that it was the exponent of a distinctly unfriendly feeling. »

enough, was led to believe that the great Boston organ had tried to « damn with faint praise » both the *Spy* and the *Pilot*.

Owing, however, to the spontaneous enthusiasm of the American reading public for such works as the *Spy* and the *Mohicans*, and to the gratifying praise bestowed by European critics on the *Pioneers* and the *Pilot*, Cooper, when he sailed for Europe in 1826, can be said to have been recognized as the American Scott by the generality of American critics, although the *North American* could go no further than to accept him as « the American Novelist »

In England, on the contrary, « the Author of the *Spy* » was generally considered from the outset as the most worthy rival of the Great Unknown, while « the Author of the *Pilot* » was commonly ranked immediately after Smollett and sometimes before.

It cannot be claimed, however, that British critical opinion set the fashion of praising Cooper by calling him *The American Scott*. Though this appellation might not, after all, be deemed very flattering by the numerous Englishmen who entertained a poor opinion of America and of her literature (4), it seems that British reviewers recoiled at the thought of associating Walter Scott and his nearest rival so intimately. Lounsbury is therefore rather misleading when he states that : « These men fancied they had exhausted the power of panegyric when they went so far as to term him the American Scott. » (5).

It is in France that Cooper was first commonly designated as *The Walter Scott of America*, since a London correspondent of the *Paris Globe* ended as follows a note announcing the publication of *Lionel Lincoln* : « ...nous n'appelons pas à

(4) This point of view is well expressed by the *London Weekly Review* for December 8, 1827, in a review of the *Red Rover* (p. 421) : « Mr. Cooper has been called the Scott of America ; but, in the infancy of literature in the new world, that is no great compliment. The author of *Waverley* may have written better, but he has also written worse tales than the *Red Rover* ».

(5) It seems that P. A. BARBA, in his study on *Cooper in Germany*, is one of those who were misled by this sentence, for he writes (p. 79) : « The English periodicals, however, were very sparing with their eulogies and thought it sufficient praise to call him « the American Scott », an epithet which has adhered to Cooper ever since ».

Londres, comme vous faites à Paris, M. Cooper, le *Walter Scott américain* ; peut-être le deviendra-t-il, car qui aurait deviné l'auteur du *Pilote* dans *Précaution*, qui fut son premier roman ? » (6).

A distinction must be made, however, between the French reading public and the literary critics. If the average French reader made no scruple to use an appellation which he found convenient, both to classify Cooper and to praise him highly without detracting from Scott's fame, the reviewers evidently considered it a duty to show themselves more discriminating. Their attitude — notwithstanding the well-established tradition to the contrary — can therefore be said to have been, for a long time, similar to that of the British critics. It is only at the end of our period, after the publication of the *Mohicans*, and consequently at about the same time as American critical opinion, that French critical opinion really adopted the popular title which was destined to prove — in the hands of Cooper's ill-wishers — so detrimental and embarrassing to its owner.

(6) Cf. February 12, 1825.

PART II

**DETAILED CRITICISMS
OF COOPER'S EARLY WORKS
(1820-1935)**

PRECAUTION

America

As we suggested in the first part of this volume, several of the erroneous ideas, which so many scholars continue to entertain concerning Precaution, are probably derived from the broad construction put on some of Lounsbury's statements. In our opinion, Cooper's first biographer ought to have qualified his sweeping assertions — about Cooper's « pretense of foreign authorship », and about the reception of the work in America (1) — by quoting S. F. C's important declarations on both these points :

The original publications of a New York house of that day were, of course, very few in number. The book attracted a degree of attention. Its literary merits were considered respectable, though not in the least brilliant. The characters were declared natural, and the moral tone was pronounced excellent. Quite as a matter of course, it was supposed, at first, to have been written in England, and by a woman. The publisher, however, declared that it was an American work, and written by a gentleman of New York. Surprise was expressed, and a degree of curiosity excited in society ; but most of those who read the book continued quite incredulous. And when, at length, the name of Mr. Cooper began to be whispered in connection with the tale, incredulity rather increased — the very suggestion was considered a piece of pleasantry. What American naval officer, it was asked, would

(1) Cf. pp. 20 and 28.

be likely to write a book so English, and so womanly in tone and execution ? In the sense of an elaborate imitation, at least, « *Precaution* » may be said to have been thoroughly successful. For a long time it was attributed to an English lady, a near connection of Mr. Cooper's. (2)

It is to be observed that this account is fully corroborated by the unpublished autobiographical notes which Cooper wrote down in the eighteen forties :

Precaution was the first of my books... Its success was moderate, both here and in England. It is true, some in this country fancied it contained so much knowledge of English life as to try to believe it was written by an English connection of mine, and that I was merely a seeming editor... The knowledge it betrayed of English society was of the most worthless and superficial kind and yet I think it gained me more reputation in that way, than my own subsequent work on England — a book written after six visits to the country, and under circumstances singularly favorable for observation !...

It has been said these books [*Precaution* and the *Spy*] were not noticed in this country, until their reputation came from Europe. This is singularly untrue. *Precaution* was quite as much noticed as it deserved — most people, indeed, fancied it an English book — and, as for the *Spy*, its success was instantaneous and decided. (3)

At any rate, the long article on *Precaution* which appeared in the *Literary and Scientific Repository and Critical Review* for April 1821 (4) is sufficient proof that certain critics at least considered it both an American novel and a work of real merit.

As we have already stated (5) the New York critic does not hesitate to compare « the last English and the last American novel » and to prefer the work of the unknown American author to Maturin's *Melmoth*. The reasons given for this preference are, it is true, chiefly moral :

We gladly turn from these chimeras dire — these feverish

(2) Cf. *Pages and Pictures*, p. 20.

(3) Cf. appendix I.

(4) Cf. pp. 364-75.

(5) *Vide supra*, Part I, p. 15.

imaginations — to the solidity and healthful spirit of *Precaution*. This is a didactic novel... The purport of the work is to show that « prevention is better than cure »... and — unlike the author of whom we have been speaking — holy things are here touched by respectful hands. Religious principle, without being rendered obtrusive, is assigned the rank it should ever hold in human affairs ; and throughout the work, the reader is unconsciously led to acknowledge that « wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness ».

Our critic, however, does not fail to examine *Precaution* from a strictly literary standpoint. He shows impartiality as well as discrimination in his appreciation of the plot :

The interest of the story increases very much in the second volume, where the plot becomes more complicated, and we are introduced to some new and agreeable acquaintances. The author has committed an error — not very common to modern novelists, who lengthen their threadbare stories till their interest is entirely exhausted : the incidents and characters are rather crowded, and might easily have supplied ample matter for another volume.

His account of the characters is highly favourable :

The heroine has certainly one cardinal fault : As a heroine, she is neither transcendently beautiful or accomplished (sic), but is a lovely, cheerful, christian woman. Indeed, the author has not failed to compliment the gentler sex. Mrs. Wilson, Emily, and Grace Chatterton, are all fine variations of female excellence... The manœuvring dowager is a very amusing specimen of that class of females who cannot « take their tea without a stratagem ». The equivoque of Denbigh and Lord Pendennys, is ingeniously managed, and well supported ; while the lofty heroism of Denbigh is skilfully mingled with softer and endearing qualities. Mr. Benfield and his steward, are perfect originals ; and we can hardly refrain from giving a specimen of their quaint humours. The wealthy city family are also well-drawn ; the purse-proud, but honest merchant, his vulgar and silly wife, the half genteel romantic daughter, and the would-be-fashionable son, afford considerable amusement.

The above comments on the female characters are partic-

ularly interesting in view of the current sneers at Cooper's « females ». The sentence on Mr. Benfield is a very happy one, for this character certainly deserves great praise. It is strange, however, that the critic should have failed to see how strong a likeness he bears to Sir Roger de Coverley.

But the reviewer's favourite is yet to be mentioned. It is the old Admiral, to whom he devotes two full pages and whom he leaves with regret. With true critical instinct he has picked out the one character which the author was especially fitted to draw :

The old Admiral is drawn to the life ; and our only regret is that we had not known him sooner. He is not drawn in general, as rough and blustering and full of oaths, but described by those nice touches which proclaim that the likeness is good. ...We are reluctant to quit the good Admiral, but our extracts are becoming too frequent. If, however, any of our readers desire to learn how to bring about a match in true sailor style, we refer them to this work, confident of their being entertained by its humour.

It is to be regretted that so gifted a reviewer should have shown himself so very lenient in his concluding remarks on the style of *Precaution* :

...the dialogues are supported with much grace and spirit ; indeed the whole style is remarkably easy and flowing... The general tenor of the language is correct and pure, if we except one word, which we disown, as not an English one ; and we do not wish to hear of American words... We must not here omit to exonerate the author from the many errors which disfigure his book. Owing to some untoward circumstances, (as mentioned at the end), it has been presented to the public with many blots, of which the responsibility must not fall upon the writer.

The next reviews of *Precaution* are of a much later date, and their authors seem to have little knowledge, either of the work itself or of its reception in America. Their evidence is particularly conflicting.

In June 1827, the *American Quarterly Review* (6) considers that *Precaution* is not inferior to the other works of Cooper, but that the novelist was unfortunate in his choice of an English background :

He displayed the same talent in his novel of « *Precaution* », but falling into the error of laying the *venue*, as the lawyers say, in the wrong place, his first work fell into oblivion, and was only brought to light again by its connexion with the author of the *Spy*, and the *Pioneers*.

At about the same date the *New York Mirror* (7) claims that *Precaution* was a complete failure :

When he penned his first production, he seems not to have had a proper idea of his own powers : he drew very scantily, if at all, upon the stores which his own observation had supplied, nor brought to light any of those striking delineations which have since rendered him so famous. He laid the scene of his story in England, because it is from thence that most of our tales of fiction have been derived — he pursued the old system of novel-makers — a system he had learned only by reading — and brought forth a work of the true *namby pamby* class, and worthy of the Minerva press. It was published, and, out of a thousand copies, only five were sold ! Not discouraged by this failure, he went to work upon a bolder plan.

Some ten years afterwards we have still another story. A general article on the works of James Fenimore Cooper, printed in the *Southern Literary Messenger* for June 1838 (8) and in the *New Yorker* for June 23 (9), asserts that *Precaution* proved a failure until it came back from England « properly endorsed »:

Although this novel possesses distinguished merit, and is surpassed by but two or three of Mr. Cooper's later productions,

(6) Cf. p. 341 (article on the American Drama).

(7) Cf. Aug. 4, 1827, p. 31.

(8) Cf. p. 375.

(9) Cf. pp. 211-12.

it was received with indifference by the American public... Precaution was not only neglected, but so severely criticised, that the author, if he had looked for fame to his countrymen, would never have resumed his pen. But the British press, with that justice, dignity and candor, which has almost universally characterized it, in relation to American literature, taught the Americans to appreciate his genius. The English critics praised his book ; his countrymen re-echoed their opinions, and read and praised it also : for now that it was properly endorsed, there could be no error.

A reprint of the work in 1839 did not call forth any interesting criticisms. *Godey's Lady's Book* for August (10) is perhaps the most elaborate in spite of its brevity :

This is a reprint of Mr. Cooper's first literary achievement. It has been revised and retouched by the author ; defects of manner corrected, and some other improvements made : but it is in no wise remarkable. It has none of the characteristic traits which in his subsequent productions so eminently distinguished Mr. Cooper — none of the fire and fervour — the brilliance of description—the vivid portraiture of character, and the strong power of grouping, which the *Spy* and the *Rover*, and others of that class, exhibit. It is, however, interesting as the first production of one who has since attained so proud an elevation in literature ; and except as compared with his other works, would be entitled to no little praise for its intrinsic merits. (11)

Of greater importance is the general but penetrating paragraph which W. G. SIMMS devotes to Precaution in a review of the *Two Admirals* : (12)

That was a very feeble work—coldly correct, elaborately tame — a second or third rate imitation of a very inferior school of writings, known as the social life novel. In works of this class, the imagination can have little play. The exercise of the creative faculty is almost entirely denied. The field of speculation is lim-

(10) Cf. p. 96.

(11) See also the *Ladies' Companion*, Aug. 1839, p. 197.

(12) Cf. *Views and Reviews*, first series, Wiley and Putnam, New York 1845, pp. 210-11.

ited ; and the analysis of minute shades of character, is all the privilege which taste and philosophy possess, for lifting the narrative above the province of mere lively dialogue, and sweet and fanciful sentiment. The ordinary events of the household, or of the snug family circle, suggest the only materials ; and a large gathering of the set, at ball or dinner, affords incident of which the novelist is required to make the highest use. Writers of much earnestness of mood, originality of thought, or intensity of imagination, seldom engage in this class of writing. Scott attempted it in *St. Ronan's Well*, and failed ; — rising only into the rank of Scott, in such portions of the story as, by a very violent transition, brought him once more into the bolder displays of wild and stirring romance. He consoled himself with the reflection that male writers were not good at these things. His conclusion, that such writings were best handled by the other sex, may be, or not, construed into a sarcasm.

In 1847, R. W. GRISWOLD, in his *Prose Writers of America*, passes in review all the published works of Cooper, but he follows Cooper's autobiographical notes so closely that we have been led to the conclusion that these notes were written for his own use. Of *Precaution* he says :

Its success was moderate, though far from contemptible. It is a ludicrous evidence of the value of critical opinion in this country, that *Precaution* was thought to discover so much knowledge of English society, as to raise a question whether its alleged author could have written it. More reputation for this sort of knowledge accrued to Mr. Cooper from *Precaution* than from his subsequent real work on England. (13).

The Democratic Review for July 1849 is most complimentary in the general article it publishes in connection with Putnam's standard edition of Cooper's novels :

His first work, « *Precaution* », displayed so much genius as well as knowledge of English society, that it was alleged none but an Englishman could have written it — and it was republished in London as an English novel. (14)

(13) Cf. p. 264. See appendix I for Cooper's autobiographical notes.

(14) Cf. p. 52.

Bryant, in his *Memorial Discourse* (1852), is amusingly non-committal :

I confess I have merely dipped into this work. The experiment was made with the first edition, deformed by a strange punctuation — a profusion of commas, and other pauses, which puzzled and repelled me. Its author, many years afterward, revised and republished it, correcting this fault, and some faults of style also, so that to a casual inspection it appeared almost another work. It was a professed delineation of English manners, though the author had then seen nothing of English society. It had, however, the honor of being adopted by the country whose manners it described, and being early republished in Great Britain passed from the first for an English novel. I am not unwilling to believe what is said of it, that it contained a promise of the powers which its author afterward put forth. (15)

Ten years later, at the completion of the Darley edition of Cooper's works, the *Atlantic Monthly* (16) publishes a long article, whose author seems to have more than « dipped » into Cooper's first novel :

« Precaution », though an indifferent novel, was yet a novel; of the orthodox length, with plot, characters, and incidents; and here and there a touch of genuine power, as in the forty-first chapter, where the scene is on board a man-of-war bringing her prizes into port. It found many readers, and excited a good deal of curiosity as to who the author might be.

In 1883 Cooper's first biographer devotes half a chapter to *Precaution*, but his criticism of the novel proper is rather slight, his aim being chiefly to study certain « peculiarities » of the author's character which *Precaution* exemplifies :

...though, compared with many of his writings, « *Precaution* » is a novel of little worth, it is, in some respects, a better guide to the knowledge of the man than his better productions.

From a literary point of view, LOUNSBURY finds fault with

(15) Cf. pp. 42-43.

(16) Cf. January 1862, p. 54.

the plot, which, in our opinion, he criticizes rather unfairly :

Her (the heroine's) story... strikingly exemplifies the carelessness in working up details which is one of Cooper's marked defects. The novel received its name... because it aimed to set forth the desirability of precaution in the choice of husband or wife. What it actually taught, however, was its undesirability. The misunderstandings, the crosses, the distresses, to which the lovers were subjected in the tale all sprang from excess of care, and not from lack of it; from exercising precaution where precaution did nothing but harm.

Among the characters, only Mrs. Wilson and her niece are mentioned, and they seem to afford the critic a welcome opportunity to use his caustic wit :

Mrs. Wilson is « clearly a great favorite of her creator, though to the immense majority of men she would seem as disagreeably strong - minded as most of Cooper's female characters are disagreeably weak-minded. This lady is the widow of a general officer, who, the reader comes heartily to feel, has, most fortunately for himself, fallen in the Peninsular war... » She « always stands ready to point a moral, though she can hardly be said to adorn the tale. »

As for her niece, Emily Moseley, she is :

... « the prototype of a long line of heroines, whose combination of propriety and incapacity places them at the farthest possible remove from the heroic »... She is not « merely propriety personified », she is « propriety magnified and intensified. » (17)

After Lounsbury, the references to *Precaution*, in the general articles on Cooper, hardly show that the critics have taken the trouble to read it. In 1906, for instance, L. H. VINCENT (18) simply says that it is « apprentice work », and, in 1921, CARL VAN DOREN calls it « an unimportant domestic-sentimental

(17) Cf. pp. 22, 28, 25 ; 26, 27 and 28.

(18) Cf. *American Literary Masters*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1906, p. 67.

romance. » (19) Sometimes, even, the critic is not ashamed to say that he has not read, and does not mean to read, the book :

... so far as I can discover — for I have no intention of reading it — [Precaution] deserves among all books the booby prize. Precaution is not only admitted to be hopelessly bad in structure and in characters and in style but it had the additional misfortune of being a comedy of typographical errors. (20)

Of recent years, however, some scholars have begun to wonder at the fact that *Precaution* was reviewed in England as an English book, and, like Susan Fenimore Cooper, they have come to the conclusion that : « In the sense of an elaborate imitation, at least, *Precaution* may be said to have been thoroughly successful. »

Thus, in 1922, Professor CAIRNS writes as follows :

How was it that while the American visitor to-day is often perplexed over minor matters of rank and usage in the English social system, this inexperienced writer could manage his company of nobles, gentry, clergy and military men and make no blunder that would betray to Englishmen themselves his alien origin ? In this respect, at least, *Precaution* was an achievement. (21)

In the *American Mercury* for March 1925, F. L. PATTEE goes a step further and tries to explain Cooper's « achievement » by the English training of Mrs. Cooper, incidentally praising the novel itself very highly indeed :

... for two generations it has been the conventional thing to dismiss it as a feeble thing and a failure — without reading a word of it. As a matter of fact, Cooper did precisely what he set

(19) Cf. *The American Novel*. New York, Macmillan, p. 27. In 1918 C. Van Doren had not been quite so perfunctory in the chapter he had contributed to the *Cambridge History of American Literature* : « *Precaution*... is a highly conventional novel. Its scene is laid in England, and no quality is more notable than stiff elegance and painful piety ». (Vol. I, p. 295).

(20) Cf. W. L. PHELPS. *Makers of American Literature*. *Ladies' Home Journal*, January 1923, p. 18.

(21) Cf. *British Criticisms*, p. 114.

out to do : he surpassed his model. Moreover, he produced what in many respects is the best novel written in America before 1821. Were it republished today as a newly-discovered early work by Jane Austen it would deceive most readers. (22)

Finally, in the *Sewanee Review* for April 1928, H.H. SCUDDER, taking Professor Pattee's article as a starting-point, endeavours to show that the English novel which Cooper tried to improve upon is not « some obscure, and, now, long-forgotten tale, but Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* ». Under the circumstances he cannot, like Professor Pattee, conclude that Cooper « surpassed his model », but his estimate of *Precaution* is nevertheless flattering :

... if the savor of the light, satiric wit is absent in *Precaution*, it has been written by a true story-teller, and it is unquestionably interesting, and almost never sags, even under the weight of its own piety. No, Cooper did not surpass his model, for his model was not of the surpassable kind, but he did industriously imitate it, and he easily surpassed every previous and contemporary American novelist, and the Cooper critic instead of hurrying on to *The Spy*, had certainly better give more than a gesture to *Precaution*. (23)

(22) Cf. pp. 292-93.

(23) Cf. *What Mr. Cooper Read to his Wife*, pp. 193-94.

England

Precaution was soon republished in England by Colburn and Co, but without any allusion to the fact that it was a reprint of an American work, as one can see from the following advertisement in the *Literary Gazette* for February 17, 1821 :

PRECAUTION; A novel, 3 vols, price 21 s.

« I cannot forbear to flatter myself that prudence and benevolence will make marriage happy ; but what can be expected except disappointment and repentance from a choice made in the immaturity of youth... without judgment... without foresight... without inquiry after conformity of opinions... rectitude of judgment, or parity of sentiment. »... *Rasselas*.

Printed for Henry Colburn and Co. Conduit Street.

Naturally enough, Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine* for March 1821 (1) contains a favourable review of the book. It begins in a very flattering way :

This work will please both the young and old. The former will like it because it is full of marriages, and the latter because it inculcates, in every page, the value of *precaution*, in entering on the matrimonial state.

The critic, however, hastens to point out that the preaching manner adopted by the author is a serious blemish. The passage is of unusual interest, for it might apply just as well to the novels of Cooper's didactic period :

The duties of religion are.. forcibly dwelt on... but in somewhat of a tone of party, or cant, if we may use the homely,

(1) Cf. p. 132 (*Historical Register*).

though expressive term, which weakens, instead of adding to, its *usefulness*, according to the favourite expression of the author: who is likewise fond of another cant term, « a professor of religion. » ... The writer of the volumes before us has no occasion to have recourse to such artifices, in order to court the approbation of his readers. Such among them as are really religious will sufficiently appreciate the goodness of his motives, without so ostentatious a display of them; and such as are not, will be more likely to become so, by a representation of the delightful feelings and happy results of pure and well-grounded principles, than by dull pages of eulogium on the principles themselves. The author, in this respect, falls into the error which he represents as shading the virtues of his favourite character, Mrs. Wilson. « She laboured under the disadvantage of what John called a didactic manner, and which, although she had not the ability, or rather taste, to amend, she had yet the sense to discern. — It was the great error of Mrs. Wilson to endeavour to convince, where she might have influenced; but her ardour of temperament, and invincible love of truth, kept her, as it were, tilting with the vices of mankind, and consequently sometimes in unprofitable combat. »

The characters are highly approved of, particularly Mr. Benfield whose portrait the reviewer draws at great length :

As, however, it is always more agreeable to commend than to censure, we will gladly leave our examination of the author's style, to enter upon his delineation of character: in which we think him extremely happy, and likely to become still more so, when the habit of writing shall enable him to express his conceptions with [a] facility equal to their spirit. The portrait of Mr. Benfield, a worthy old bachelor, whom a disappointment of the heart has early driven into retirement, after sitting one session in parliament, and acting the courtier and the beau for one season, at the commencement of the last reign, is particularly amusing: and the readiness with which he connects his monotonous present, with his gayer past, by finding likenesses in every one whom he esteems, however unlike, to Lord Gosford, the companion of his school-days, or Lady Juliana, the mistress of his youth, has something in it at once so entertaining to the imagination, and so touching to the affections, that we cannot but feel almost as acutely as he is represented to do, when he is induced,

by the interest he takes in his favourite niece Emily, to revisit London, after a lapse of nearly half a century, and finds all the illusions of his retirement dissipated, by discovering the beauteous sylphlike form of the Lady Juliana, whose remembrance he had cherished with so much devotion, transformed into a fat, red-faced dowager, seated at a whist-table, and disputing a bet with all the eagerness of a gamester, and the cunning of a sharper. The Jarvis family, the Chattertons, and the Moseleys, are all well drawn, and sufficiently distinguished from each other, without any unnatural attempts at forcible contrast.

The conclusion is full of encouragement for the young novelist :

The incidents keep up an equal, if not a very forcible degree of interest, and, altogether, the author displays talents for novel-writing which will undoubtedly secure him the approbation of the public, if, in his future works, he can divest himself of a certain formality of style, which perhaps is, in the present instance, occasioned by too great an anxiety, that none of his « usefulness » shall be lost for want of being set forth with, what he may conceive, becoming sententiousness of diction.

The *Gentleman's Magazine* for April (2) complains somewhat of the obscurity arising from the « multiplicity of characters », but its comments, on the whole, are very favourable. Its praise of the heroine and other female characters is particularly worthy of notice :

This is a spirited performance, although not equally so throughout; — as a Work of entertainment it claims a distinguished place amid this species of publications. It is no small praise to say, that it will repay the attention requisite to its development; for, in the multiplicity of characters to which we are introduced, some confusion and obscurity must arise; yet these characters are well sustained; and, upon the whole, the story is conducted with ease and consistency through various scenes in domestic life, all tending to prove the great importance of early education, in cultivating religious and moral principles..

Emily has cultivated all those endearing feminine graces

which diffuse happiness in a family circle, and which (even without high talents) are attainable by all who will take the trouble to acquire them... The intrigues of the match-making dowager, Lady Chatterton, are happily contrasted by the delicacy and tenderness of her daughter Grace.

The *Monthly Review* for June, (3) though not unfavourable, is chiefly concerned with the faults it discovers in the plot, and with the author's « verbal inaccuracies » :

Although the plan of this novel may be regarded as good, yet it is not sufficiently developed to be useful. The disguise of Lord Pendennys, and his supposition that Emily rejects him in consequence of that deception, are both void of probability; and the writer's verbal inaccuracies may be conjectured from the following specimens : vol. I, p. 235, « the distance *they had to go was rode* in silence » ; p. 114, « the interest of the peer *had began* » ; p. 281, « his eyes were fixed on the inanimate body which *laid by his side* » ; vol. II. p. 25, « alarmed lest the *draught* (draft) should increase » ; p. 76, « bring it about *before they leave here* » ; p. 200, « I had *began* » ; p. 274, « a look of drollery that *howed the Marquess a bit of a quiz* » ; vol. III, p. 47, « turning to the servants, the Earl said, *Answer the bell when called* » ; p. 127, « the figure of Pendennyss by her side reconciled her mind with a magnificence *to* which it was hitherto unacquainted : *he look the Lord* indeed » ; &c. &c.

It is really abominable to see, in such frequent instances, these daring defiances of common grammar issue from any decent press.

All these criticisms judged *Precaution* on its own merits. When Cooper became famous, this first novel of his was eclipsed by its great successors, and it was hardly mentioned in most of the general articles dealing with Cooper's life and work. The *Spirit of Literature* for October 30, 1830 is a striking exception, for it devotes to *Precaution* a long paragraph (4) in which Cooper's « maiden novel » is flippantly contrasted with his later productions :

(3) Cf. p. 211.

(4) Cf. p. 425.

« Precaution » was Mr. Cooper's first and stillest born. The most curious thing about it is, that it was written by him — a fact which — in spite of all the assurances of advertisements, we were very ill-disposed to believe, till it was formally acknowledged in the French edition of his novels, lately published at Paris, under his own inspection. In the first place, while all his other productions are on the Walter Scott pattern, this is decidedly *Miss Burneyish* ; in the second, the plot, which in general he slurs over in the most slovenly manner, pursuant to fashion, is here painfully laboured — every incident has, as well as a « being », an « end and aim », and, as usual in novels of that description, half of said incidents at least leave panting probability « toiling after them in vain » ; in the third place, it is excessively dull ; in the fourth — and here comes the greatest wonder of all — there is no trace of the writer's being a Yankee. This, in a novel of Mr Cooper's, is almost incredible, but, « upon our lives ; 'tis true ». There are several highly respectable, virtuous, and amiable characters introduced in it, who are all represented as being born and bred in this insignificant island ; nay, the hero is a British officer, who fights at Waterloo, and that insignificant skirmish is alluded to in terms consonant with the ridiculous importance « the British » attach to it. And having said thus much of Mr. Cooper's maiden novel, we dismiss it, *precautioning* our readers not to take the trouble of contracting any more intimate acquaintance therewith, inasmuch as we have thus presented them with all that it is worth reading for in a nutshell.

Some time after Cooper's death, the *Eclectic Review* (5) makes up for these disparaging comments by stating that « much of [Cooper's] inimitable dialogue and terseness of expression » was evident in *Precaution*. But the whole article teems with so many egregious blunders, that it may be safely inferred that the critic had never read a line of most of Cooper's works, and of *Precaution* in particular.

In 1900 MOWBRAY MORRIS (6) candidly acknowledges that he

(5) Cf. April 1852, pp. 410-22 (the article was reprinted in the *Eclectic Magazine* for June 1852, pp. 207-13).

(6) Cf. Introduction to the *Mohicans*. London, Macmillan, 1900, p. XIV.

has never opened *Precaution*, but his witty remark upon its reception in England as an English work is worthy of some consideration, in view of the extreme importance attached to this fact by several American critics of the present day :

« I am not ashamed to say that I have never read *Precaution*. Bryant's case was worse than mine... It seems, indeed, to have made little stir either in its own country or in England, where it was published in the following year without apparently creating any suspicion of its American origin, from which we may suppose that the author's ignorance of English scenery and English society was not then, any more than it need be now, considered surprising in an English novelist. » (7)

(7) To a certain extent, Mowbray Morris seems to have followed Lounsbury.

Cf. LOUNSBURY, pp. 19-20: « The fact that he knew personally nothing about what he was describing was in itself no insuperable objection. That ignorance was then and has since been shared by many novelists on both sides of the water, who have treated of the same subject ».

France

It was the success of the translations of the *Spy*, *Pioneers* and *Pilot* which brought about the publication of *Precaution* in French, in March 1825, under the title of *Précaution, ou le Choix d'un Mari*. French critics were thus denied the opportunity of judging Cooper's maiden novel on its own merits, and it naturally suffered by comparison with its predecessors in order of translation.

The first and longest review of *Precaution* is to be found in a general article on Cooper's works, published in the *Globe* for March 12, 1825. The critic (E. T.) considers that Cooper was unfortunate in the choice of his model, but he praises him for the truth of at least one character and the comical quality of certain situations : (1)

Son premier roman, *Précaution*, appartient à l'Ecole de Miss Edgeworth, et c'est une première imitation qui ne lui a pas porté bonheur. *Précaution* n'est guère au-dessus de cette foule de romans médiocres publiés annuellement en Angleterre par la coterie des *bas-bleus*, qu'on pourrait appeler aussi la *coterie des douairières de la littérature anglaise*. Ce sont des tableaux d'intérieur passablement dessinés mais chargés de détails inutiles, des scènes trop prolongées et des conversations frivoles autour d'une table à thé. *Précaution* a du moins un but moral. L'idée de cette mère si tourmentée de la double peur de ne pas marier ses filles et de les mal marier, est vraie [2] ; elle est souvent comique. Quelques épisodes sont racontés aussi avec un certain charme ;

(1) Cf. p. 395.

[2] E. T. probably means Lady Chatterton, and « mal marier » is to be taken in the sense of marrying a daughter to a poor man (like Denbigh, for instance). See the end of chapter 10.

mais M. Cooper a trop copié un genre usé et que M. Théodore Hook vient enfin de rajeunir dans ses piquantes esquisses de mœurs intitulées : « *Sayings and doings.* »

The *Revue Encyclopédique* for January 1827, in another general article on Cooper, is perfunctory but flattering enough :

M. Cooper débuta dans la littérature par un roman moral, *Précaution*, qui appartient à l'école des Miss Burney et Edgeworth, et qui, même après les productions de ces aimables auteurs, a été lu avec plaisir. Toutefois, ce n'est point dans ce genre qu'il a obtenu sa grande réputation, à la fois américaine et européenne (3).

In November of the same year, however, the same review gives a more detailed and less favourable account of *Précaution*, which it criticizes for its over-complicated plot :

Précaution est un roman de mœurs. Il ne représente que des scènes de famille et roule entièrement sur le besoin et la difficulté de choisir un bon mari ; le grand nombre de personnages introduits par l'auteur, en fait un véritable *imbroglio* dont la solution ne repose que sur un changement de nom qui se découvre à la fin ; nous n'en parlons, au reste, que pour souvenir ; il était loin de faire attendre ceux qui l'ont suivi (4).

Twelve years later, this passage is reproduced almost word for word by GIRAULT DE SAINT FARGEAU in his *Revue des Romans* (5). On the other hand, CHARLES ROMÉY's, *Notice Biographique et Littéraire sur J.-F. Cooper*, published in 1841 as an introduction to *Mercédès de Castille*, contains rather flattering comments, which remind us of the first opinion expressed by the *Revue Encyclopédique* :

Son premier ouvrage, toutefois, ne sembla pas promettre ce qu'a réalisé depuis l'habile romancier ; non qu'il n'y ait dans ce premier roman, *Précaution ou le Choix d'un mari*, de l'observa-

(3) Cf. p. 261. (Article signed J.).

(4) Cf. p. 350.

(5) Cf. tome I, p. 227 (Paris, Didot, 1839).

tion, des nuances délicates, des portraits de mœurs finement touchés ; mais Cooper semble être mal à l'aise dans le cercle où il s'est renfermé ; l'air, la place, lui manquent dans la peinture des mœurs de salon ; il lui faut un champ plus vaste, plus de soleil, de liberté et d'espace.

Finally, in 1844, LOUIS DE LOMÉNIE follows the *Globe* article very closely in his *Galerie des Contemporains Illustres* (6). He omits, it is true, the few complimentary remarks made by E. T. in 1825 :

Son premier roman... n'eut qu'un médiocre succès en Amérique et il est resté peu connu en Europe. C'est un roman de mœurs à la manière de Miss Edgeworth, dont la scène se passe en Angleterre ; il est surchargé de petits détails inutiles, encombré de longues conversations, et ne présente qu'un très faible intérêt.

(6) See the last article of vol. 8, p. 10.

Conclusion

The first general conclusion which can be advanced with a reasonable degree of certainty is that *Precaution* practically ceased to exist, for English and French critics, within Cooper's own lifetime, while American critics have never been able to avoid passing judgment on it — even during the period when one of them was not ashamed to declare that he did not feel bound to submit to the ordeal of reading it.

With regard to the reception of the work on its first appearance, England, on the whole, seems to have proved more kindly than either America or France, if we judge from the number of favourable comments in English periodicals of good standing.

This may have given rise to the rumour that *Precaution* passed unnoticed in the United States until it came back from England « properly endorsed ». But Cooper's positive denial of the fact, in his autobiographical notes, is fully corroborated by the warm praise awarded to *Precaution* in the *Literary and Scientific Repository and Critical Review* as early as April 1821. (1).

For France we have pointed out that *Precaution* became known only after the *Spy*, the *Pioneers* and the *Pilot*. It was therefore launched at a disadvantage owing to the fame of its forerunners.

The interest of English critics in *Precaution* may be said to

(1) It would be idle to deny, however, that the favourable comments of the British periodicals did increase the reputation of the author of *Precaution* in his own country. See Cooper's anecdote on the subject in a note to *Afloat and Ashore* (chap. 27, end) quoted in appendix II,

have come to an end with the severe account the *Spirit of Literature* gave of Cooper's «first and stillest born», in October 1830. On the other side of the Channel it was still commented upon at some length towards the middle of the century, but these comments were hardly more than repetitions of the criticisms which had appeared in the late twenties and early thirties.

The question is more complicated when one comes to the United States. To begin with, one must realize that, if it is an error to assert, with the *Southern Literary Messenger* for June 1838, that *Precaution* proved a failure until English criticism approved of it, it is a still greater error to believe, as too many modern scholars do, that it was a failure all along.

As a matter of fact, for more than sixty years after the almost enthusiastic article in the *Literary and Scientific Repository*, i. e. until the publication of Lounsbury's biography of Cooper in 1883, *Precaution* is mentioned not unfrequently, and in terms favourable enough. Two or three times even it is lauded beyond measure, and once or twice only do we find it considered as a decidedly inferior work. Its republication in 1839 is at any rate a proof of its vitality.

LOUNSBURY, in the short space he devotes to the criticism of *Precaution* as a novel, does not actually state that it is a poor book *in itself*, nor does he assert that it proved an *absolute* failure. Yet his ironical comments give one the impression that it is negligible from a literary point of view and that it met with little success indeed. We cannot help therefore considering him partly responsible for the disparaging remarks which the majority of American critics were wont to make, concerning *Precaution*, during the forty years which elapsed between the appearance of his work and the turn of the tide marked by the favourable opinions expressed by W. B. CAIRNS, F. L. PATTEE and H. H. SCUDDER.

We have seen how the reception of *Precaution* as an English book, by the British critics of 1821, struck Professor Cairns as a remarkable fact. Reasoning thereupon somewhat like Susan Fenimore Cooper in 1861, and the *Democratic Review* in 1849, he put this fact down to the credit of the American author. This led to F. L. PATTEE's exceedingly warm praise of *Precau-*

tion, and to H. H. SCUDDER'S elaborate and flattering parallel between Cooper's maiden novel and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

If Precaution has been unduly slighted for two generations these recent developments more than atone for the neglect into which it had fallen. But one is inclined to wonder what Cooper himself would have thought of these tributes, in view of the reasoning on which they are founded. Does he not say in his autobiographical notes : « The knowledge of English life displayed in Precaution was barely removed from the contemptible, yet, its author got a sort of minor American reputation on it ! » (2)

Detailed criticisms of Precaution are exceedingly rare, but some of the main aspects of the work are touched upon in a good number of the criticisms we have quoted. The *plot* is often censured — with varying degrees of severity — for being over crowded and complicated. At times it is found lacking in probability. The *style* is hardly ever praised — the *Literary and Scientific Repository* being the most conspicuous exception — while the author's « verbal inaccuracies » are severely reprov'd by the *Monthly Review* (E. 1821). The *moral tone* which pervades the book is much to the taste of the former American periodical, but its preaching manner is disapproved of by *Colburn's* (E. 1821).

It is the *delineation of character* which is frequently selected as the author's *forte*, Mr. Benfield and the old Admiral, the heroine and other ladies, being in turn mentioned as particularly successful portraits. The only dissenting voice here is that of LOUNSBURY, whose apparently constitutional antipathy for women of the Mrs. Wilson or Emily Moseley type finds vent in biting sarcasm.

(2) *Vide supra* (p. 59) Griswold's interpretation of this passage.

THE SPY

America

We have already quoted Cooper as stating that the « success » of the *Spy* was « instantaneous and decided » in America (1), but we have seen that this was true of the general public only, and that, to borrow a phrase from the novelist's daughter, most American critics « waited for the word of command from England, ere committing themselves ». (2).

Dennie's *Portfolio* we have mentioned as one honourable exception (3) and we have it on Bryant's authority (4) that Cooper never forgot its encouraging review of his first great work ;

I have spoken of the hesitation which American critics felt in admitting the merits of the *Spy*, on account of crudities in the plot or the composition, some of which no doubt really existed. An exception must be made in favor of the *Port Folio*, which, in a notice written by Mrs. Sarah Hall, mother of the editor of that periodical, and author of *Conversations on the Bible*, gave the work a cordial welcome ; and Cooper, as I am informed, never forgot this act of timely and ready kindness.

Mrs. HALL's review opens with a rather elaborate analysis of the novel, which is followed by a warm eulogy of the work as a whole :

(1) *Vide supra*, p. 54.

(2) *Vide supra*, p. 16.

(3) *Ibid.* (February 1822, pp. 90-101).

(4) Cf. *Memorial Discourse*, p. 45.

Many circumstances subservient to the events which we have mentioned are omitted. All are well imagined, and we think the whole picture, with some very trifling exceptions, in excellent keeping. For the same reason we give but two extracts — indeed the feast is so abundant, - that we know not where to choose.

She then proceeds to examine the *Spy* in detail. With regard to the plot, she finds fault with the epilogue — which she calls « a lame and impotent conclusion » — and with the introduction of Washington into a work of fiction ; but she approves of the death of Isabella, which, it appears, had been objected to in some quarters :

The work should have terminated with the interview in Gen. Washington's camp, in which the reader might have been led to believe that the faithful agent had been rewarded by a competency in some part of the country, remote from the scene of his services...

The manner in which Gen. Washington is introduced is a serious defect. He should have worn the disguise of Mr. Harper to the last ; for it is offering too great a violence to our veneration for this immortal man to exhibit him, unattended and almost in sight of the enemy, begging for a night's lodging, or skulking in a hut to obtain an interview with a pedlar-spy. Moreover there is nothing done by him, which could not have been effected by an inferior agency. Mr. Harper's testimony might have procured Captain Wharton's acquittal before the Court Martial, or a reversal of the sentence from the Commander in Chief. *Nec Deus intersit* — is a maxim which must be familiar to our American novelist...

We cannot agree with one of our journalists, that « exaggeration prevails [throughout] ». This critic is of opinion that « the death of Isabella is a gratuitous and revolting tragedy ». Now, according to all the laws of romantic love, we think she is taken out of the way in the best possible manner. If a young lady be at all indulged in falling in love before she is courted — which sounds like a solecism even in the ears of an old bachelor [5] and that

(5) Oliver Oldschool, Esq. (the *nom de plume* of the editor of the *Portfolio*).

too with one who was previously betrothed, the poet may well be excused for a corresponding violence in disposing of her. The love of Isabella, we are rather inclined to pronounce a blemish in the book. But that her death is not *singularly* « revolting » may be proved by the fact, that a very amiable lady of Elizabethtown (New-Jersey), did actually lose her life precisely in this way, during the revolutionary war. Whilst she sat in her own parlour, surrounded by her children, she was killed by a shot from a British musket, which entered through the window.

To complete this tragedy in real life — her husband was killed about the same period, by one of our own centinels — whether by accident, or misapprehension of his character, is not now recollected. Several of these children are now amongst our most respectable citizens ; and as they reside in New York, it is highly probable that the author of « the Neutral ground », had this disastrous incident in his eye, when he introduced the catastrophe in question.

Mrs. Hall seems to entertain a high opinion of the powers of the young novelist as a painter of character :

The characters are sufficiently numerous to produce variety ; yet not so crowded, as to create confusion, or distract attention.

They are naturally delineated, and consistently supported. The dialogues are humorous, sentimental, or pathetic, in strict accordance with the proper element of the speakers. Some of these, might be curtailed with advantage to the whole — for the main affair is so fascinating, that we are sometimes disposed to be impatient under the interruption. We allude to the conversations between the inferior characters. Yet to those who relish the exhibition of low life, many of these scenes must be exquisite, because they bear the stamp of nature. But no reader of taste or feeling would part with a single word that passes between Dunwoodie and the engaging Frances...

The language and manners of the American officers have been censured as coarse and vulgar. Without undertaking to decide whether they do not talk as young *gentlemen* in a camp — or « free and easy » when at a jovial board, are accustomed to converse, we can at least observe, they never disgust us with profanity.

The character of Harvey Birch, much to our regret, is not

analysed in detail, but the scene with the *Skinners* at the death-bed of his father is quoted at length. Captain Lawton, Dr. Sitgreaves and the old negro Cæsar, each come in for a few compliments :

The ensuing battle is chiefly remarkable for the death of Lawton, whose fine spirit, generosity and good-nature, must find an admirer in every reader...

Dr. Sitgreaves... ought not to be passed over in silence. His benevolence, his singleness of heart and a certain degree of originality, make him welcome whenever he appears. Perhaps his simplicity is carried too far in the dialogue with Katy Haynes ; and this damsel herself shows a little spice of the sentimental order of lovelorn heroines when she talks of that gentleman *seeming to take an interest in her story*. The language does not accord with her usual style of discourse and station in life.

Honest old Cæsar should not be thrown in the shade though his colour be black. He is active, faithful and diligent ; and forms a good contrast with the imbecility of his master.

The perfect decency of the work is not the least of its qualities in the eyes of Mrs. Hall :

As we wish to bestow on this accomplished writer all the praise that is due to him — both for the credit of our own literature, and in return for the pleasure we have received, we will mention one more very rare quality of his book — we mean its total freedom from indelicacy in word and thought. We do not recollect that a single page is tarnished by this unpardonable stain. If we were to examine severely, we might point out some passages, not altogether to our mind. But its faults are very trivial.

Finally Mrs. Hall dismisses the question of style in a few lines at the end of her review. She evidently considers that the first duty of a literary critic, in a young nation, is to encourage budding talent and to foster the growth of a national literature. She is therefore inclined to be very lenient on the score of mere correctness of form :

As to the style — we really devoured the whole work with such

avidity, that we had no time to be fastidious on that score. It may be characterized generally as deficient in richness and classical purity. It does not possess that exuberant and precipitous flow which distinguishes works of original genius. But if it breathe not the warm current of inspiration, if the eye be not dazzled by the profusion and splendour which we behold in some of the pages of the mighty masters of song, we should not be the less grateful to that vigorous conception which has sketched so animated a picture of scenes which « come home to the business and bosom » of every American.

The steady demand for new editions of the *Spy*, and the successful performance of a dramatized version of it in many theatres, naturally called forth enthusiastically patriotic articles in the periodicals most influenced by public feeling. It is very probable, for instance, that *Niles' Weekly Register* faithfully represented the opinion of many American citizens when, on May 25, 1822, it gloried in the joint success of Cooper and Irving :

THE SPY, *or a tale of the Neutral Ground*. A Third edition of this fascinating American novel is now in the press ; and the two former editions are said to have yielded the author the handsome sum of *two thousand* dollars. It will probably pass through several editions more, though British reviewers may ask, « *who reads an American book ?* ».

« The *Spy* » has been dramatised, and performed with complete success at many of our principal theatres.

Our countryman, *Washington Irving*, is at present in London. He has just sold a new work, called *Bracebridge Hall* to a bookseller of that metropolis, for one thousand guineas. (6)

Encouraged by such evident and almost palpable proofs of the value of American works on the literary market, the writer, who, incidentally, laid no claim « to the character of a critic », did not hesitate to declare the *Spy* superior by far to the last work of the Great Unknown (*The Pirate*), and to vent his feelings against the « Scotch Novels », which no longer stood unrivalled thanks to the genius of an American (7).

(6) Cf. p. 193.

(7) Cf. the quotation, p. 17.

For all this, most professional critics still observed a wary silence, and it was not until July 1822 — i. e. long after English criticisms of the London edition of the *Spy* had become available in America — that the *North American Review* (8) published the famous article which Cooper never forgave.

It is hard for us to believe that Cooper was not guilty of some exaggeration when he wrote in 1842 : « The *North American*, and many of the *old literati*, endeavored to lessen it in the public estimation, but it succeeded beyond a question. Were I to relate the meannesses and falsehoods that were resorted to, in certain quarters, to injure this book, it might surprise you ». (9) On the other hand, we cannot but consider that the leading American periodical of the time strangely failed in its duty towards American literature when it gave the first great American novel so tardy a welcome. And again, we are obliged to acknowledge that, upon examination, this belated welcome does not sound very friendly. It may be that the reviewer was sincerely afraid of losing his character as a critic, in the eyes of the dreaded British Aristarchs, if he allowed himself to depart from a strict Olympian impassibility and to betray too much admiration for the work of an American author. Nevertheless it is very likely that a New Englander would have fared much better at his hands, as is shown by the note on the *New England Tale* appended to the review of the *Spy* : « We may with far greater confidence boast of a *religious* Edgeworth in our land, than of a wonder-working Scott ».

Let it be granted, therefore, that Cooper had a perfect right to complain of a shameful lack of support and encouragement on the part of the *North American*. But it does not follow that the review this periodical gave of the *Spy* is negligible as a piece of literary criticism, irrespective of time and place. On the contrary it is one of the most complete and illuminating studies of the novel and its author.

To begin with, the reviewer [W. H. GARDINER.] clearly points

(8) Cf. pp. 250-82.

(9) Cf. autobiographical notes in appendix I.

out the significance of the *Spy* in connection with the development of American literature as a whole :

We have long been of opinion that our native country opens to the adventurous novel-writer a wide, untrodden field, replete with new matter admirably adapted to the purposes of fiction...

There seem to be three great epochs in American history, which are peculiarly well fitted for historical romance ; — the times just succeeding the first settlement — the era of the Indian wars, which lie scattered along a considerable period — and the revolution...

Instead of wearying the reader with a formal disquisition on the characters and scenes of the third epoch, we beg leave to introduce him, without farther ceremony, if he has not already made the acquaintance, to Mr. Harvey Birch, better known by the name of the *Spy* of the Neutral Ground ; whom we greet, as doubtless the reader does also, with the greater satisfaction, in that he has taken a world of trouble off our hands, doing away with the painful necessity of establishing by syllogism and inference this part of our proposition, viz. that the American revolution is an admirable basis, on which to found fictions of the highest order of romantic interest.

This flattering statement, as might be expected, is immediately qualified by reservations, which would be sufficient to show that the writer is more anxious to preserve his own reputation for critical acumen than to encourage the rising novelist :

This trouble is taken off our hands, however, not because the work before us is a perfect model of its kind, but because, whatever other deficiencies or deformities may appertain to it, want of interest, the only unpardonable sin of romance, is not among them.

Some of the « deficiencies » and « deformities » alluded to are to be found in the plot, which is said to be hurried and confused towards the end and rather too crowded with incidents, a few of which are mere repetitions of preceding episodes. Glaring contradictions are also noticeable here and there :

Nothing but unpardonable haste can account for the sad hud-

dling into confusion, towards the end, of a plot so well laid in the outset...

The inventive faculty, that, which if it be not genius is at least its chief characteristic, we cannot but think our author possesses in an eminent degree ; and we have rather to complain of that want of good taste, which has crowded so much of violent action into so small a space, than of paucity of incident, or monotony of style. At the same time that we cannot but remark again upon that gross negligence, which has produced the effect of poverty ; as, for instance, two miraculous escapes of the pedlar, effected in precisely the same way ; two burnings, that of the pedlar's hut, and that of the Wharton mansion, closely succeeding each other ; and the horror of encountering the gallows erected for his execution, first inflicted upon Wharton himself, and then upon Frances... we find not unfrequent such gross negligences as making locks which were *black* in one place, *auburn* in another ; speaking of a house as lowering from the « *light of day* » when it was just fired because the night was « *too dark to move in* ».

The part played by Washington is accounted a great blemish :

It may well... be a matter of doubt, whether General Washington himself ever submitted to a personal disguise for the purpose of obtaining this kind of information, either directly or indirectly ; and, until we see undoubted evidence of the fact, we shall not hesitate to deny it. The whole character of Washington is against it. His station, his trust, than which none could be higher, are against it. The opinion of those most intimate with him, by their official relations, is entirely against it. Nay, it was almost physically impossible. His remarkable stature and physiognomy, his lofty carriage, the unbending dignity of his whole demeanor, and, above all, the notoriety of his person making detection almost certain, rendered him the most unfit of all men to practise such a deception. We are compelled to believe, therefore, that our author has deviated from historical accuracy, in a point where he should most scrupulously have adhered to it. When such a personage as Washington is made to move in the scenes of fiction, so recently too after the termination of his conspicuous ca-

reer, he should appear, if he would appear safely, only as his countrymen have known and must ever remember him, at the head of armies, or in the dignity of state. Our imagination will hardly consent to follow him through the mere common courtesies, or grosser familiarities of life; and where our author attempts so to represent him, he undertakes a task, under which greater and more practised abilities would sink.

Among the episodes, the critic strongly objects to the introduction of Isabella Singleton, and also to the night scene in the mountains in which the part played by Washington « is far worse than the dull dignity with which he was stigmatized in the early scenes ». Most of the others, however, are warmly praised, and the hanging of the Skinner is quoted at length and compared for its power — though not for its style — with the celebrated drowning of Morris in *Rob Roy*.

Nearly all the characters seem to have found favour with the critic :

His portraits are spirited and for the most part, we doubt not striking likenesses. Cæsar, in particular, whom we are unromantic enough to esteem the true hero of the piece, and who is certainly a pattern for all « people of color », is not only a real African, but if any of our readers doubt it, we can point out the very person who sat for the picture. Sergeant Hollister, overflowing with piety and valor, is a man whom we are all well acquainted with. The calculating Katy Haines we meet every day of our lives ; — and the speculator upon the land and the misfortunes of others we may not look far to recognize. These are all original sketchings, done with a masterly hand, and serve strongly to illustrate the remarks which we made in the beginning of our article, upon the wide scope which our country affords for the exercise of this kind of talent. Betty Flanagan, though neither native nor new, is hardly inferior to either of the others ; and Lawton, if he would not insist upon setting himself up for a finished gentleman, and were a little less ambitious of being thought a comical fellow withal, would be a trooper after our own hearts. Even Dunwoodie, though by no means the man our author took him to be, is precisely such a vaporish hero as we have seen strutting in

regimentals many a day ; and his mistress, who loves him far better than he deserves, keeping the courtship a little too much on her own side, is, or at least was, before she caught the Singleton infection, a pretty little miniature of an enthusiastic, warm-hearted heroine. Of the insignificants, old Wharton and Miss Peyton are excellent pictures, true to the life ; and we think we may add Sarah to the list, before she goes mad ; after that calamity, though she sets out in her new character well enough, she carries the joke a little too far. And this reminds us of Dr. Sitgreaves, whom it is a wonder we had not thought of before. The surgeon of the horse has many excellent points of humor about him.. But Dr Sitgreaves after all is a mere caricature, and, we speak it with all due deference to the « lights of science », considerably overdone. A late foreign journal has exclaimed loudly against the whole system of *bores* — even the great Erymanthian bores — (if we may follow Cicero in quoting the pun of the Agrigentines) of the writer of the Waverley novels. The remarks are certainly just, but we are not prepared to go to the full length of the conclusion that would suddenly strike out of existence so prodigious a monster, as Dominie Sampson and others of his kind — « all my pretty chickens and their dam — at one fell swoop », merely because they are monsters, certainly very harmless, and infinitely amusing in their way. But then they should be properly kept up — let out now and then seasonably ; — whereas our friend, Dr Sitgreaves has no sort of tact at perceiving when he is wanted, and coming in at all hours without knocking, makes us laugh at his professional ignorance rather than his simplicity, in discoursing so seriously as he does on the difficulties of replacing a shattered brain, or reuniting a severed artery, to any purpose of animal life. Unseasonable jokes, and a constant repetition of the same, are rather a fault of our author's. Thus poor Cæsar's teeth are made to chatter every ten pages, till we wonder that a single stump is left in his head.

Still, the main character, that of the Spy, is not entirely satisfactory :

Birch is a grand conception, but imperfectly executed. His movements are sometimes too rapid for mere human agency, as where he sets Hollister and his party in motion, and in almost the same time that Cæsar on horseback, and at full speed, could travel with the marriage ring from the « four corners » to

the « Locusts », he performs the same journey on foot, and arrives in time to interrupt the ceremonies. His warnings of danger are sometimes a little too ambiguous to warrant the effects they produce, such as « the moon will not rise till after midnight — a fit time for deeds of darkness. » He often usurps a dignity, which hardly belongs to him, and then again relapses into a degree of vulgarity quite inconsistent with his late dignity, and needless for any purpose of deception. His constant allusions to *him*, who alone knew him, but ill agree with his habitual caution ; and the useless tricks that he plays, merely to astonish the natives, are often quite unaccountable ; as where he calls to Dunwoodie to « stand or die » ; informs him that he wants nothing but his good opinion (which he certainly took a novel way of securing) ; warns him of some impending danger without explaining what ; and finally concludes with the very superfluous manœuvre of firing his musket in the air, throwing it at the feet of Dunwoodie, and vanishing *in fumo*.

The critic also complains of « the great stiffness and inelégance, relieved by a little vulgarity », of the author's « high life », quoting as instances of the former fault all the passages in which Washington appears, while the conduct of Captain Lawton and his fellow-officers at Mr. Wharton's affords him an example of the second defect.

The style is censured for many imperfections due to haste :

...we find not unfrequent such gross negligences as... causing a gentleman to establish a *cigar-box*, instead of a cigar, in the corner of his mouth, « without the slightest interruption to discourse », while loose and inelegant expressions, and even sentences of ungrammatical construction, are more frequent than they could have been with the ordinary care of an ordinary writer. We hope these indications of haste do not proceed from the pitiful ambition of feeding the compositor with sheets, on which the ink is scarce dry.

Having thus examined the novel in detail, the reviewer proceeds to characterize the talent of the author, and we must recognize that many of his deductions are exceedingly shrewd. At the very outset one is struck with the truth of this sentence :

« The particular talent of our author, seems to lie in describing action and hitting off the humours of low life », and it goes without saying that the comments which follow are in every way worthy of this fine beginning.

Later on, one might feel inclined to find fault with the statement that Cooper is not a master of pathos, but it must be allowed that the critic has taken care to qualify his opinion in a way which leaves little to criticize :

The author of the *Spy* has not shown himself to be pre-eminently endowed with the power of moving the softer affections. That mysterious touch, which can open the secret sources of passion, and dissolve the heart in tears, and without which the highest order of excellence in fictitious composition cannot be attained, we do not say that he has not the mastery of, but he has not yet proved to us that he has. The close of the trial scene, the pedlar's short description of the terrors of a lonely and ignominious death, which we have quoted above, and one of the early interviews between Frances and Dunwoodie, are the only instances which occur to us, in which he has exhibited much pathos ; and these are not of the first rate.

The same remark applies to the passage dealing with Cooper's feeling for nature :

Neither has our author betrayed that exquisite sensibility to the beauties of nature, which so commonly belongs to the poetic mind. There is a vast field of novelty open in our country, for this species of descriptive writing. Our author has not neglected to enter upon it ; — but though his descriptions of natural scenery contain nothing that is not American, and are in fact good, yet they exhibit only the most obvious peculiarities of nature in this western world, with not a mark of that deep moral feeling, which weds the soul to beauty wherever it exists, and breathes its own freshness and fragrance over all that it creates.

There follows a passage, on a certain lack of taste in the author of the *Spy*, which is interesting as showing both the unfriendliness of the critic and his classical leanings as to style :

A delicate and discriminating taste, the result only of high

cultivation, does not seem to be among the characteristics of this writer, and we trust he may not think it beneath him, to devote himself to the refinement of a power, which diffuses such an inexpressible charm over the productions of genius, and without which the invention, which can feed the appetite with perpetual novelty, and the imagination which can electrify the mind, may disgust as often as they please. It is true we are seldom shocked by gross violations of this principle, except in the mistaken view of the refinements of artificial and polished life, which have been already noticed ; but harmony and smoothness are wanting throughout the whole. Of this we cannot be expected to give an illustration, unless the reader should find one in the citations already made ; but as an instance of particularly bad taste we would specify, amongst many that might be adduced, the description of the highway, which « ran boldly to the base of a barrier that would frighten a spirit less adventurous, and regardless of danger and difficulties kept its undeviating way until the summit was gained, when, rioting for a moment in victory, it as daringly plunged into the opposite vale, and resumed its meandering and sloth. » This was doubtless meant for fine description ; — but the personification of a turnpike is about as violent an appeal to the imagination as can well be made.

Another passage on Cooper's abuse of epithets and adverbs is both true and entertaining, but it can very well be doubted whether such a style of criticism was calculated to encourage authorship :

One capital defect, which remains to be considered, is that excessive minuteness which leaves nothing for the imagination to supply. The enumeration of little unimportant facts — mere necessary consequences — and full length descriptions of the exact tone, look, and gesture, with which something, or nothing, is uttered, the precise graduation of this or that emotion, and nice calculations upon the quantum of scorn or of smile exhibited on every trifling occasion, are prodigious *weakeners* of style, and when once noticed by the reader, produce a ludicrous effect. Upon such a point a single illustration is worth a volume of commentary, and the following specimen presents itself literally at a single glance. It is from a short conversation (not so witty by

the way as the author intended) between Capt. Lawton and Mason, his lieutenant.

« The thought makes my head ache, replied the other, *shrugging up his shoulders*. » « I have much reason to be obliged to the captain, said Mason, *drily*. » — « I'll not feign anger with you, returned the captain, *good humoredly*. » — « I believe both of us will be spared &c. observed Mason, *kindly*. » — « From my soul I hope so, exclaimed Lawton, *fervently*. » — « I thought they were going the wrong way, answered the subaltern, *drily*. » — « It was either your fall &c. returned the *waggish* subaltern, *gravely*. » — « Ay, but he managed &c. continued Mason, *coolly*. » — « You slept through it all, said Mason, *laconically*. » — « Yes, returned the other with a sigh. » — « Yes, yes, said the captain, *quickly*, » — and so on to the end of *all* the chapters. A species of characterising, that reminds one of the dauber in Don Quixote, who wrote under his portrait, *this is a cock!* — Epithets and adverbs are the wretched expedients of a lame artist, who knows not how to do that which, to say the truth, our author does full well — make his characters speak for themselves, and exhibit their qualities by word and deed.

The conclusion, however, is, at first, favourable enough :

We have to thank our author for having demonstrated so entirely to our satisfaction, that an admirable topic for the romantic historian has grown out of the American Revolution ; although we still think it a less prolific source than our earlier history. If he has not done all that man could do, he has at least exhibited powers from which we have everything to hope. The Spy of the Neutral Ground is not the production of an ordinary mind, and we will not presume to set limits to that capacity of improvement, which the author of *Precaution* has evinced in this second attempt. He has the high praise, and will have, we may add, the future glory, of having struck into a new path — of having opened a mine of exhaustless wealth — in a word, he has laid the foundations of American romance, and is really the first who has deserved the appellation of a distinguished American novel writer.

But one should not overlook the fact that this tribute is strangely qualified by a preceding passage, in which the critic says he has discerned nothing in the Spy « which draws the writer a step nearer to the author of the Waverley novels, than

it does to Shakespeare himself. » (10) Besides the very last sentences of the conclusion do much to remove the favourable impression one may have conceived at the beginning :

We hope to hear from him again — not too soon. We do not exactly

« drop in unwilling ears

This saving counsel keep your piece *nine years*. »

But we protest most seriously against modern rapidity of production ; and really beg that he will be so good (for it is a virtue now-a-days), as just to write his book before he prints it ; and it would do no harm if he were to read it over once into the bargain.

Indeed this critic was in earnest when he declared in the course of his review : « We have no fondness for indiscriminate censure or praise ; and we humbly trust, we shall never award that palm, which we should withhold from a foreign production, to the work of an American, merely because it is such. »

When some years had elapsed, the references to the Spy in the general articles on Cooper's works often insisted on the character of its reception in the United States, but some of them were exceedingly inaccurate. In June 1838, for instance, the *Southern Literary Messenger* (11) claimed that the book did not sell until England's verdict became known :

To the justice and good sense of the English press, which may claim the distinction of giving America her most celebrated novelist, Mr. Cooper is also indebted to the ultimate success of his second novel, *The Spy*... This production now ranks one of the first of the Cooperian novels ; yet, on its first appearance, as it had not passed the ordeal of the English press, which at that time governed the literary taste of the American public, as absolutely as ever the ministry governed the American colonies, it was received with doubt and hesitation. No man ventured an opinion ; all eyes were directed towards England, awaiting her decision. The judgment proved to be favorable, and the shelves of the publishers, which had remained uninvaded until this crisis, were now rapidly

(10) *Vide supra*, p. 18.

(11) Cf. p. 375. See also the *New Yorker* for June 23, 1838, p. 211-12.

cleared of a work, the merits of which had been first seen and appreciated in a foreign land. Verily, « a prophet hath no honour in his own country. »

In the eighteen forties, certain disparaging comments on Cooper's first great work led W. GILMORE SIMMS to emphasize the literary merits of the *Spy* :

...« the *Spy* » was an event. It was the boldest and best attempt at the historical romance which had ever been made in America. It is somewhat the practice, at this day, to disparage that story. This is in very bad taste. The book is a good one — full of faults, perhaps, and blunders ; but full also of decided merits, and marked by a boldness of conception, and a courage in progress, which clearly showed the confidence of genius in its own resources. The conception of the *Spy*, as a character, was a very noble one..

It does not lessen the value of such a novel, nor the ideal truth of such a conception, that such a character is not often to be found. It is sufficiently true if it wins our sympathies and commands our respect. This is always the purpose of the ideal, which, if it can effect such results, becomes at once a model and a reality. The character of the « *Spy* » was not the only good one of the book. Lawton and Sitgreaves were both good conceptions, though rather exaggerated ones. Lawton was a somewhat too burly Virginian ; and his appetite was too strong an ingredient in his chivalry. But, as his origin was British, this may have been due to the truthfulness of portraiture.

The defect of the story was rather in its action than its characters. This is the usual and grand defect in all Mr. Cooper's stories (12).

In 1847, GRISWOLD paid the *Spy* a still warmer tribute, denouncing the attitude of the *North American* in a way which showed that he had been thoroughly roused by the bitter tone of Cooper's autobiographical notes :

The *Spy* followed. No one will dispute the success of *The Spy*. It was almost immediately republished in all parts of Europe. The novelty of an American book of this character probably contribu-

(12) Cf. *Views and Reviews* (1845), pp. 211-12.

ted to give it circulation. It is worthy of remark that all our own leading periodicals looked coldly upon it ; though the country did not. The North American Review — ever unwilling to do justice to Mr. Cooper — had a very ill-natured notice of it, professing to place the New England Tale far above it. In spite of such shallow criticism, however, the book was universally popular. It was decidedly the best historical romance then written by an American ; not without faults, indeed, but with a fair plot, clearly and strongly drawn characters, and exhibiting great boldness and originality of conception. Its success was perhaps decisive of Mr. Cooper's career, and it gave an extraordinary impulse to literature in the country. More than any thing that had before occurred, it roused the people from their feeling of intellectual dependence. (13).

That same year the *Columbian Magazine* for January (14) published an engraving representing « Harvey Birch and the Skinners » with a note recalling the glorious success of the *Spy* and regretting the time when Cooper had not set up as a moral reformer :

Twenty years ago or thereabout it would scarcely have been needful to provide any reader in this country with an explanation of the scene represented in this picture. The fame of the first great American novelist was then rife throughout the land ; and « Have you read *The Spy* », was a question almost as universal and matter of course as at any subsequent time has been the like query having for its subject a production of Bulwer, Dickens or Eugene Sue. Mr. Cooper was then giving to the world the freshness not only of his intellect but of his feelings ; he wrote with the desire to please rather than to censure and dogmatize ; his books were not political or social homilies but what they professed to be, romances — faulty in some respects, but strongly imbued with the excellences of vivid narration, descriptive power, well managed plot and vigorously delineated character. He had not then set himself up as a great moral teacher, or undertaken to school his countrymen in manners, democracy and the law of libel. Perhaps his later works have been greater in intellect and imbued with a loftier purpose, but those which appeared at the time referred to had by far the greatest number of readers. »

(13) Cf. *The Prose Writers of America*, p. 264.

(14) Cf. p. 40.

In June 1849, the *American Whig Review* (15) warmly welcomed a reprint of the *Spy* which constituted the first volume of Putnam's edition of Cooper's works :

This novel has delighted one generation, and will continue to be read by their descendants with equal delight ; it has never lost its hold on the public mind. Who is not familiar with *Harper*, and *Fanny Wharton*, and *Peyton Dunwoodie*, and *Harvey Birch*, and *Captain Lawton* of the Virginia horse, and with *Dr. Sitgreaves*, and *Betty Flanagan*, and the old black servant *Cæsar* — these are old friends, old dwellers in our brain — they are lodged beyond the reach of fate.

Upon the death of Cooper, the *New York Evening Post* (16) borrowed from Griswold the statement that the *Spy* rescued the American people « from the feeling of intellectual dependence ».

In January 1852 the *North American Review* (17) was certainly more friendly than thirty years before. It said :

The novel which first brought the name of Cooper into distinguished notice was *The Spy* ; and this book, which gave him his earliest reputation, will contribute largely to preserve it. The story is full of interest, and the character of *Harvey Birch* is drawn with singular skill.

In February of the same year BRYANT'S *Memorial Discourse* (18) contained a fine eulogy of the *Spy*, but it should be noted that, in a later edition of this Discourse, the presence of Washington was declared to be a blemish which Cooper himself had come to regret :

« Are you not delighted », wrote a literary friend to me, who has since risen to high distinction as a writer, both in verse and in prose, « are you not delighted with the *Spy*, as a work of infinite spirit and genius ? » In that word genius lay the explanation

(15) Cf. p. 648.

(16) Quoted in *Littell's Living Age* for October 1851, p. 87.

(17) Cf. p. 158 of the critique by F. PARKMAN.

(18) Cf. pp. 43-44.

of the hold which the work had taken on the minds of men. What it had of excellence was peculiar and unborrowed ; its pictures of life, whether in repose or activity, were drawn with broad lights and shadows, immediately from living originals in nature or in his own imagination. To him, whatever he described was true ; it was made a reality to him by the strength with which he conceived it. His power in the delineation of character was shown in the principal personage of his story, Harvey Birch, on whom, though he has chosen to employ him in the ignoble office of a spy, and endowed him with the qualities necessary to his profession, — extreme circumspection, fertility in stratagem, and the art of concealing his real character, — qualities which, in conjunction with selfishness and greediness, make the scoundrel, he has bestowed the virtues of generosity, magnanimity, an intense love of country, a fidelity not to be corrupted, and a disinterestedness beyond temptation. Out of this combination of qualities he has wrought a character which is a favorite in all nations, and with all classes of mankind. The introduction of General Washington as one of the personages of the story, was a blemish in the work which Cooper, in later years, regretted to such a degree that he spoke of writing the *Spy* over again (19).

In 1853 H. T. TUCKERMAN'S essay on Cooper in *Homes of American Authors* (20) included an elaborate study of Harvey Birch, which is undoubtedly one of the most illuminating interpretations of the character of the spy :

Wordsworth had already shown how freely the elements of poetry are scattered through the walks of lowly life. The « Wanderer » was a beautiful illustration of the wisdom that lies hidden in the brooks and trees, and the pure sunshine of a mind that has chastened all inordinate desires, and learnt to look upon nature and be happy. But temptation had never presented itself to him in its most dangerous form. His greatest peril had been a lonely walk over roads that were never wholly deserted, and his greatest self-denial, to throw off his pack when he felt that he had earned enough. Cooper was the first to take the humble son of toil, whose

(19) The last sentence is found in the version of the Discourse prefixed to the Townsend edition of Cooper's works (1861). It does not appear in the volume published by Putnam in 1852 (p. 44).

(20) New York, Putnam, pp. 189-92.

daily earnings were to be won at the daily hazard of life, and by planting the holy principle of faith and sacrifice in his bosom, raise him to the dignity of a patriot, without depriving him of the characteristics of a pedler. It is in this that he shows his genius. Many a happy conception has been destroyed for want of this nice discrimination, or rather this intuitive perception of the homogeneous elements of character ; of what cannot be taken from it, and what cannot be engrafted upon it, without destroying it. Harvey is a pedler, with a pedler's habits and language, and in all that was essential to the preservation of his identity, a pedler's feelings... There is but one touch of poetry in him, and that is rather the effect of his position than of any inward sense of the poetical ; objective rather than subjective. I mean the exquisite description of his feelings when led out into the sunshine to die. But for this, and you would almost fancy that he had walked like Peter Bell through the loveliest scenes without any perception of their loveliness.

Thus shrewdness, resolution, and plain common sense, are the apparent traits of his character, and those, probably, by which he had been known among his customers and friends. Strange elements, it would seem, for the hero of a romance, but essential, for all that, to the keeping and harmony of the author's conception...

Set the pedler and British general (sic) face to face, and let him watch the eye and the lips of the man who controls the fate of thousands, as he would the changing features of a customer that is haggling for a sixpence. Place him alone in the midst of enemies who are thirsting for his blood, and give him the same coolness and resolution with which he had faced robbers who asked him for nothing but his pack. Let the same common sense which had been his guide in trade, guide him still amid the crooks and tangles of policy, and the dark passions of civil war ; let human life, and at times even the fate of a nation depend upon his truth, and cutting him off from every hope of honor, leave him no stimulant but the love of country, and no reward but the consciousness of duty well performed, and the pedler, though a pedler still, becomes a hero.

Some ten years later, in the long article which the *Atlantic Monthly* devoted to Cooper in connection with the Darley edition of his works (21), the critic amusingly described his

(21) Cf. January 1862, pp. 54-55.

disappointment on reading the *Spy* after an interval of many years ; he nevertheless recognized the essential merits of the novel :

The second novel (*The Spy*) was a great improvement upon the first, and fairly took the public by storm. We are old enough to remember its first appearance ; the eager curiosity and keen discussion which it awakened ; the criticism which it called forth ; and, above all, the animated delight with which it was received by all who were young or not critical. Distinctly, too, can we recall the breathless rapture with which we hung over its pages, in those happy days when the mind's appetite for books was as ravenous as the body's for bread-and-butter and a novel, with plenty of fighting in it, was all we asked at a writer's hands. In order to qualify ourselves for the task which we have undertaken in this article, we have read « *The Spy* » a second time ; and melancholy indeed was the contrast between the recollections of the boy and the impressions of the man. It was the difference between the theatre by gas-light and the theatre by day-light : the gold was pinchbeck, the gems were glass, the flowers were cambric and colored paper, the goblets were gilded pasteboard. Painfully did the ideal light fade away, and the well-remembered scene stand revealed in disenchanting day. With incredulous surprise, with a constant struggle between past images and present revelations, were we forced to acknowledge the improbability of the story, the clumsiness of the style, the awkwardness of the dialogue, the want of Nature in many of the characters, the absurdity of many of the incidents, and the painfulness of some of the scenes. But with all this, a candid, though critical judgment could not but admit that these grave defects were attended by striking merits, which pleaded in mitigation of literary sentence. It was stamped with a truth, earnestness, and vital power, of which its predecessor gave no promise. Though the story was improbable, it seized upon the attention with a powerful grasp from the very start, and the hold was not relaxed till the end. Whatever criticism it might challenge, no one could call it dull : the only offence in a book which neither gods nor men nor critics can pardon... The character of Washington was an elaborate failure, and the author, in his later years, regretted that he had introduced this august form into a work of fiction ; but Harvey Birch was an original sketch, happily conceived, and, in the main, well sustained. His mysterious figure was recognized as a new

accession to the repertory of the novelist, and not a mere modification of a preexisting type. And, above all, « *The Spy* » had the charm of reality ; it tasted of the soil ; it was the first successful attempt to throw an imaginative light over American history, and to do for our country what the author of « *Waverley* » had done for Scotland.

Appleton's Journal for May 18, 1872 paid a fine tribute to Cooper as a historian, by stating that the *Spy*, better than any other work, enabled the younger generations to realize the conditions under which the war of Independence had been waged :

The scenes of the Neutral Ground, through which we follow Harvey Birch — wily and double-faced outwardly, staunch and unswerving at heart — are those we never should have caught in their vividness, if Cooper had not painted them ; and yet we could ill have afforded to miss them, for in them and their surroundings of nobler feeling, keen struggling forces, and intense effort for mastery, the whole war of Independence appears in epitome, more clearly than we of this day have ever seen it pictured elsewhere (22).

Ten years later LOUNSBURY gave much space to the story of the composition, publication and reception of the *Spy*, but omitted to study it in detail from a literary point of view. The following passages are those which come nearest to a detailed literary appreciation :

...almost as it were by accident he had struck into the vein best fitted for the display of his natural powers... It was the story of adventure, using adventure in its broadest sense, that he was fitted to tell : and fortunately for him Walter Scott, then in the very height of his popularity, had made it supremely fashionable. In this it is only needful to draw character in bold outlines... It is not the personality of the actors to which the attention is supremely drawn, though even in that there is ample field for the exhibition of striking characterization. It is the events that carry us along.. There can be no greater absurdity than to speak of this kind of story, as is sometimes done, as being inferior in itself

to those devoted exclusively to the delineation of manners or character, or even of the subtler motives which act upon the heart and life. As well might one say that the « Iliad » is a poem of inferior type to the « Excursion »...

The career of success, which began sixty years ago, has suffered vicissitudes, but never suspension ; and to this hour, whatever fault may be found with the work as a whole, the name of Harvey Birch is still one of the best known in fiction. No tale produced during the present century has probably had so extensive a circulation ; and the leading character in it has found admirers everywhere and at times imitators (23).

In 1885 JAMES GRANT WILSON also testified that the Spy remained « a great favourite after a lapse of sixty three years ». (24) Sixteen years later the *Outlook* for December 14, 1901 went even further when saying : « It is still, in spite of the great popularity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for a number of years, the most widely read American novel, and Harvey Birch is perhaps the best-known figure in American fiction. » (25)

In 1906 L. H. VINCENT, in his study on Cooper, gave a summary rather than a criticism of the Spy. One paragraph however contains humorous and interesting comments on several characters :

The romantic hero of the story is Peyton Dunwoodie, a youth « whose dark and sparkling glance » played havoc with the hearts of impressionable ladies. But Peyton was true, and loved but one. More to the modern taste are the humors of Lawton and Sitgreaves, of Sergeant Hollister and Betty Flanagan. « Mr. Harper » is impressive, and the mystery of his character well sustained. The ladies of « The Locusts » have the quaint charm inseparable from other-day manners and costume. To be sure one of them, who seems likely to die of love, is mercifully killed by a random bullet, and another becomes a maniac. Novel-readers wanted a good deal for their money in 1821. But Frances Wharton is a likable little creature, though her talk does not in the least resemble that of Miss Clara Middleton. (26)

(23) Cf. pp. 32, 33 and 37.

(24) Cf. *Bryant and His Friends*, p. 232.

(25) Cf. *Fenimore Cooper To-day*, p. 1037.

(26) Cf. *American Literary Masters*, p. 76.

Four years later, on the contrary, in another study on Cooper, JOHN ERSKINE devoted considerable space to a detailed criticism of the *Spy* (27) which, owing to its importance, must be ranked with the 1822 review of the *North American*. John Erskine is, however, much more favourable to Cooper.

His demonstration that Harvey Birch is « a perfect blend of romance and realism » is, at the outset, particularly convincing :

The patriotism of the character is what first appealed to Cooper ; it is interesting, however, to trace the story-teller's instinct as it enlarged on the original sketch. The refusal of a reward is made more remarkable by portraying Harvey Birch by nature or force of circumstances a miser. The fact that he is in mortal danger from the countrymen he is serving, comes home with more tragic force through the portrait of his dying father, whom Harvey's heroic disguise has brought to disgrace and a pauper's death-bed ; his father's need also explains, in part at least, Harvey's greed for gold. He is an outcast for his patriotism, but by nature, as Cooper is careful to show, he loves home life and gentle society ; and the pathos of his resolve to leave a dishonored name to no children of his own, is further set off with effective irony by Katy Haynes' wish to marry him — Katy being the person she is. All this misery which Cooper naturally imagined for his spy, he turns to fine account by portraying Harvey without a heroic trait, save his one master purpose, and even his patriotism has become through too prolonged suffering less a thing of passion than of duty ; he has neither mental ability nor personal prowess, and were it not for his strong will, he would show himself a coward. The character illustrates at once what has been thought of [as] Cooper's most remarkable gift, a perfect blend of romance and realism. Harvey's dangers and escapes are not less thrilling than those of the more heroic Rob Roy, yet while the page is still before him the reader sees no legendary glamor over Harvey himself ; so actual does he seem, with his limitations and virtues, that the novel has often been mistaken for biography.

Very striking and original, but less convincing perhaps, is

the critic's further effort to differentiate Harvey Birch from Leatherstocking and Long Tom Coffin :

The individuality of Harvey Birch is greater because he has no parallel in Cooper's writings. It is not surprising that he is sometimes mentioned with Leatherstocking and Long Tom Coffin, for like them he is the ultra-romantic hero of the novel he appears in, and like them is set apart from the surrounding characters in a peculiar isolation, more marked than the somewhat similar distinction of Rob Roy or Robin Hood. But in detail he has nothing in common with any of these heroes, — principally, as has been said, because he is in the personal sense not a hero at all. And he has none of the philosophy, the zest in life, the self-completeness, that are cardinal traits in Natty Bumppo and Long Tom. They have outward experiences, adventures of life and death, but they come before the reader with their minds from the beginning in the peace of an un-Byronic stoicism ; Harvey Birch's sufferings are more of the mind than of the body, and his adventures have always the double interest of an outward and inward conflict. And whereas the isolation of Leatherstocking and Long Tom seems all-sufficient, as though they could have neither forefathers nor descendants, Harvey's loneliness is inherited from his race, in some inequality of power to aspiration ; his dying father saw within the son that which would make him a pilgrim through life, and seemed to recognize it as the extension of his own destiny.

Whatever was his courage when he undertook his desperate career, Harvey shows little bravery after he has become a hunted outlaw. He is almost a coward, if the name cowardice can describe the dread of a traitor's death, made terribly real on many a page. Indeed, the fear of hanging is a main theme in the story — in Major André's fate, and in the adventures of Captain Wharton, of Harvey, and of the miserable Skinner. The hanging of the Skinner, powerfully described in the last pages of the book, not only gets rid of the villain, but justifies in Captain Wharton and Harvey the fear of death, which the frequent escapes and rescues had made seem somewhat vague and unreal. With the terrible fascination of the Skinner's death Harvey's cowardice is, as it were, expiated. When he dies honorably on the field of battle in the War of 1812, his better self, his patriotism, has become a kind of mania, and with this passion blends a jealous pride in Washington's exoneration of his character. For the conventional conclusions of that curiously written last chapter Cooper might make apologies, but he was always singularly happy in imagining

the old age of his best characters, and the convincing fitness of Harvey Birch's end could not be bettered.

Most striking too is the high praise awarded to the character of Washington, after the uncomplimentary remarks of so many American critics and the regrets expressed by Cooper himself :

...Cooper had a genuine gift for historical portraiture. In *The Spy* he presented that picture of Washington which has seemed most authentic to the popular imagination. The benevolence and aristocratic reserve which distinguish the great patriot in tradition are here set forth with the conviction Cooper always gives to the characters he cares for ; and if he himself showed in his later career a lack of tact and manner, he might vindicate his breeding by this picture, as fine a conception of gentleman as Thackeray himself could give.

In the same way one is somewhat surprised to discover that the young ladies in the *Spy*, including Isabella Singleton, have found a valiant champion in the sophisticated author of the *Private Life of Helen of Troy* :

The women in *The Spy* are on the whole as well imagined as any in Cooper's writing, and — with the forbearance of Professor Lounsbury and other severe critics of Cooper's « females », — this is no slight praise. At their worst Cooper's heroines are unspeakable, but at their best they need no apologies.. Miss Singleton stands somewhat apart from the story, the pathetic victim of love and fate ; it is from her that modern sympathy has been furthest withdrawn by the changing fashions of thought ; in the sentimental vogue which lasted well into Mrs. Stowe's work, she is the typical victim of life, beautiful and innocent, and cherishing a secret passion. Of course she must die prematurely, not only because that is the fate of the type, but because she is somewhat in the way. Her death by the bullet of the Skinner who is shooting at Lawton, makes it possible to hang the Skinner later with the reader's cordial approval. The thorough contrivance of the plot is further made clear by a comparison of Mrs. Stowe's summary method of disposing of her condemned heroines, Eva or Nina or Mara, with Cooper's careful preparation which makes perfectly natural the Skinner's attempt to kill Lawton and his accidental killing of Miss Singleton.

The compliments bestowed on Betty Flanagan and Dr. Sitgreaves as « humorous » characters are less unexpected :

Maria Edgeworth praised the character of the Irish woman, Betty Flanagan, saying that the portrait could not have been bettered by an Irish writer. She is one of the best minor characters Cooper created, for he developed later a tendency to slight the unimportant persons in his narrative, unless he had a special interest in them. In this instance he imagined a genuinely funny character, and humor, as his hastiest reader knows, is not usually his strength.

Dr. Sitgreaves, the surgeon, belongs to a type Cooper must have loved, for they are represented in almost every novel. Some of the novelist's critics call the whole series « bores », using the word for both classification and description. It would be fairer to call them pedants, for invariably their infirmity is absorption in some department of knowledge. Dr. Sitgreaves... is less unattractive than most of the type, and his humor, though unconscious, is not slight.

With regard to the plot, it is interesting to note that, in contradistinction to the *North American Review*, John Erskine is of opinion that the successful introduction into a novel of two similar episodes is a proof of genius rather than negligence :

Only an opulent genius could have described two such pursuits under circumstances so nearly identical ; but whenever the situation involves rapid physical motion, Cooper has no superior in English, perhaps in any literature.

After all this, the conclusion cannot but be particularly warm :

Well-made as is the plot of *The Spy*, and convincing as the characters are, the book leaves a strong final impression of two other qualities — the distinctness of the scene, and the rapid movements within it...

Cooper's fame is so linked with the Leatherstocking Tales that it is natural to look upon *The Spy* as a sort of practice piece for his more typical work. In comparison with that unique series it undoubtedly suffers, simply because it belongs in a well-filled compartment of the novel, and many of its fellows in the class are

world masterpieces. But among the historical novels of adventure it takes a high place, — quite the highest place among American historical novels.

CARL VAN DOREN, in 1918 and 1921 (28), is less enthusiastic, though still very favourable. He praises both the plot and its setting :

...the flights of Birch from friend and foe alike exhibit a power to carry on plots with a sustained sweep which belongs to none but the masters of narration. To rapid movement Cooper added the virtue of a very real setting. He knew Westchester, where his scene was laid, the « Neutral Ground » of the Revolution, as Scott knew his own border ; the topography of *The Spy* is drawn with a firm and accurate hand.

But Cooper is found deficient in the delineation of many characters, Harvey Birch and Captain Lawton being the chief exceptions :

In the characters Cooper was not so successful — by strict canons of realism was not successful at all. Cherishing already an aristocratic and traditional conception of women, he accepted for his narrative the romantic ideals of the day, the ideals of Scott and Byron. Writing of violent events in which, of necessity, ladies could play but a small part, he cast his heroines into the straightest mold of helplessness and propriety. With the less sheltered classes, such as were represented by Betty Flanagan the sutler, Cooper could be more veracious. Of the men who appear in *The Spy*, most are mere gentlemen, mere heroes, although Captain Lawton, the Virginia dragoon, is drawn with spirit and truth, and here and there among the inferior soldiers and the slaves appear a few individual characteristics. Harvey Birch, however, peddler and patriot, outwardly no hero at all and yet surpassingly heroic of soul as he prowls about on his subtle errands, is memorable and arresting. The skill with which he is presented, gaunt, weather-beaten, canny, mysterious, should not conceal the fact that his patriotism is actually as supernatural as

(28) Cf. *Cambridge History of American Literature*, vol. I, pp. 295-96 and *The American Novel*, pp. 28-29. We quote from the latter work, which offers a carefully revised version of the chapter originally contributed to the *Cambridge History*.

are the dæmonic impulses of Brown's characters. Patriotism drives Birch relentlessly to his destiny, at once wrecking and honoring him. This same romantic fate condemns him to be sad and lonely, a dedicated soul who captures attention by his secrecy and holds it by his magnificent adventures. All this is pure romance, but it is romance extraordinarily realized.

It should be added that Carl Van Doren does not think the character of Washington a failure since he says that : « the figure of Washington, disguised as Mr. Harper and yet always looming gigantically through his disguise, moves among the other personages like a half-suspected god. »

In April of the same year, an *Outline Study of Cooper's « The Spy »*, published in a Boston educational magazine (29), shows us that the work of entertainment of 1821 has become, after the lapse of a century, a classic most seriously studied in American schools. The author of this outline, MAUD ELMA KINGSLEY, does not however think very highly of the Spy as a literary work :

The Spy is a work of no great literary merit, but it has created a noted character in fiction — Harvey Birch, the Spy of the Neutral Ground.

Cooper's character sketches of Harvey Birch, Dr. Sitgreaves, and Captain Lawton are drawn with skill and sympathy ; Katy Haynes and Betty Flanagan stand out as vivid and humorous portraitures ; but the « ladies » of the novel are wooden and lifeless and the scenes in which they appear are written in a style awkward, stilted and pretentious...

The sentimental scenes of the story are worthless from any point of view.

Still the plot is praised indirectly, for the writer takes pains to show that : « No action important to the development of the story takes place without the intervention of Harvey Birch », around whom the plot centers. There is also a list of the « most striking scenes of the novel », and the comments upon the last scene and the epilogue are very favourable :

(29) Cf. *Education*, pp. 520-33.

Most Striking Scenes of the Novel.

The Robbery ; the interrupted marriage ; the burial ; Captain Lawton's death ; Captain Wharton's trial ; the race for life ; Frances visits the mysterious hut ; Washington and the spy ; the burning of the Locusts ; death of Harvey Birch...

The closing scene of the story proper possesses real dramatic appeal and is genuinely and effectively tragic. It brings out forcibly the tragic position of a loyal patriot whose qualifications fit him for a spy rather [than] a soldier...

The ending of the story is artistic — thirty-three years after the Revolution, the loyalty of the spy is proven and becomes history.

In January 1923 WILLIAM LYON PHELPS overlooks what he calls the « cutaneous blemishes » to insist on the essential merits of Cooper's first masterpiece :

The Spy scored a prodigious success, and deserved it. The vitality of the story triumphed over its cutaneous blemishes. The death of brave Captain Lawton and the hanging of the Skinner by the cowboys are narrated by a master's hand. These events are as vivid to me now as when I first saw them in the book nearly fifty years ago.

The figure of the spy as a supreme example of patriotism — for the sacrifice of one's honor for one's country is rightly regarded as a greater sacrifice than one's life — is forever appealing. (30)

In the *American Mercury* for March 1925, F. L. PATTEE incidentally discusses the Spy, in connection with his theory that the influence of Mrs. Cooper on her husband cannot be overestimated. Hence the paradoxical aspect of the following passage :

On every page of the volume the stamp of Mrs. Cooper was unmistakable, though, curiously enough, the early readers did not recognize it. It was a novel of the American aristocracy ; all its major characters were Tories ; even the leading patriotic figure was a Virginia aristocrat. Its intent was clearly to draw the sympathies of the reader from the American « mob » that was

(30) Cf. *Ladies' Home Journal*, p. 18.

fighting the war to the real victims of the Revolution, the Loyalists, who were made in every way superior. (31)

Finally, in 1929, Professor LEISY, in his survey of American literature (32) — after explaining the genesis of the Spy in a way which does not seem to agree with Cooper's and S. F. C's account of the matter — pays a flattering tribute to Cooper's broad-minded treatment of revolutionary history :

In *The Spy*, his first important book, he apparently borrowed the pedlar from Scott's *Antiquary*, and by making him a spy, utilized interest in the well-known play *André*, by his friend William Dunlap. To give the spy the best opportunity for his maneuvers, he staged the scene in 1780 on the « neutral ground »... Last, he introduced, after Scott's manner, a mysterious stranger who proved to be none other than General Washington. By making the Wharton family a house divided against itself, and by allowing the spy to be persecuted by bands both of Skinners and Cowboys he supplied the element of conflict, and in addition, that of suspense. Cooper's distinct picture of the fratricidal nature of the war is all the more commendable when it is remembered that not until recently has the fog of « patriotic » legend lifted from the tradition of the Whig historians who misrepresented the Revolution as a united uprising against the mother country.

(31) Cf. p. 293.

(32) Cf. *American Literature, an Interpretative Survey*, New York, Crowell, 1929, pp. 53-54.

England

Barely two months after its publication in New York, a pirated edition of the *Spy* was printed in London (1) and advertised as follows in the *Literary Gazette* for March 9, 1822 :

New Novel. — In 3 vols. 12mo. price 21s. boards, *THE SPY* ; a Tale of the Neutral Ground : referring to some particular occurrences during the American War ; also pourtraying American Scenery and Manners. By the Author of « Precaution ».

« Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself had said (*sic*),
This is my own, my native land ? »

Printed for G. & W.B. Wittaker, Ave-Maria-lane.

About a month later, the *Gazette of Fashion and Magazine of the Fine Arts* (2) published a very outspoken but, on the whole, favourable review of the work. The opening paragraph is a good sample of the general tone of the article :

This novel is a decided attempt, by its American author, to rival the mysterious parent of *Waverley*, and the other Scotch novels of that numerous family ; — as a first essay, it is rather formidable, though it must be confessed to fall short of its prototypes. It has been written, perhaps, in haste, evidently without much care ; a coarseness of conception, defective style and a vicious composition, which sometimes outrages grammatical propriety, are among its most prominent blemishes. The author's object seems to have been to shew his own countrymen, and

(1) R. E. SPILLER, in his *Bibliography*, states that this edition was published on February 28.

(2) April 6, 1822, pp. 163-64.

perhaps ours, that it is not so difficult a task as has been imagined, to emulate the fame of the voluminous Unknown ; and that a man may tread in the same circle as the *Wizard of the North*, without being much of a conjuror. The story he has selected for his purpose, is simple, the incidents neither remarkable for their novelty, or the ingenuity with which they are arranged ; the persons are humorously but coarsely sketched, and evidently written with a view to some of those novels we have alluded to ; and still, with these very slender pretensions, the author has produced an interesting and spirited work, and has gone nearer than any other imitator, to shake the laurels of the Caledonian Apollo of novel writers.

With regard to plot and style, the critic may be said to rest satisfied with the above comments, if we except a few laudatory remarks on the death-bed scene in Harvey's cottage and on the court martial, together with the following lines on the style of the descriptions :

The descriptions of scenery are vivid, but those of the skirmishes of which there is rather a superflux, are very ill done, and want every character of truth.

The characters, on the contrary, are analysed at some length :

The character of Birch is full of solemn mystery, and without giving any minute details, the author has managed to convey the idea of a fine energetic character, whose fortitude and patriotism have elevated him beyond his condition, and enabled him to support an almost overwhelming load of misery... His noble refusal of the reward, in a scene with Washington, is well described...

[*Lawton*] This soldier, who is a compound of careless drollery, and resistless strength and courage, will remind the reader somewhat of Sergeant Bothwell ; it is the most skilfully drawn character in the novel. He immediately sees through the captain's disguise, and divests him of it in an irresistibly whimsical manner..

Dr. Sitgreaves, a surgeon, who is so enamoured of his profession, that he once broke his little finger for the gratification of observing the progress of the bones adhering again, is an original of the most laughable kind.

Cæsar the negro servant, is well drawn, and his incongruous dialect quite whimsical...

The female characters are perhaps the most feeble...

The conclusion, though containing a few additional criticisms, is quite encouraging, and also very broad-minded with regard to the patriotism which breathes through Cooper's pages :

Although the novel is decidedly an amusing one, the faults are great and many ; there is an evident design to spin out some parts, which have been greater favourites of the author, than they will be of the readers, and his knowledge of mankind seems not to have been drawn from the best sources of observation. A very strong tone of nationality pervades the work, but with this of course we can find no fault. We should recommend the author to another trial, and greater pains, and for his encouragement we assure him that he need not despair of approaching the Great Unknown, as he has been laughably enough called.

The same broad-mindedness is apparent in a short but favourable notice of the *Spy* in the *Monthly Censor* for June (3) :

The period to which this novel refers is one of the most unfortunate and least honourable to Britain, in modern history ; to America it is the reverse ; and as the work is apparently the production of a native of the latter country, with a due share of national partiality, the English reader will not always fully enter into the feelings of the author, and will hardly forgive the preference which he shews. The tale is well chosen for the purpose of conveying an idea of the character of the warfare, and the habits of the republican army. It abounds with variety of incident, and possesses the higher merit of inculcating no principles except those of honour and morality. We know not whether its portraits of American manners be correct ; they are certainly not very inviting.

The *Monthly Literary Register* for the same month contains

(3) Cf. p. 114 (June 1822).

a regular review of the *Spy* which is highly laudatory. We cannot, however, go so far as to say with Professor Cairns that « almost without exception [it] praises the novel for the things which later critics have pronounced weakest » (4).

The main — we might almost say the sole — criticism advanced by the reviewer is that the *Spy* has « no distinct hero » :

...as to the general construction of the narrative, though the characters are very judiciously disposed, there is this fault, that we see no distinct hero in the piece — the principal attention is not kept sufficiently to one object — the hero is through one volume the pedlar — and through another some one else. This general fault, however, is redeemed by the talent of the author...

The reviewer's praise of the pathetic and humorous scenes, of the « martial descriptions » and of the « sketches of American scenery and manners » do not seem exaggerated in view of other appreciations of the *Spy* (5) :

There are scenes of great pathos and sentiment in the book. There is likewise a pleasant sprinkling of the gay and humorous... The martial descriptions naturally occurring from the scene of the story are well given... The sketches of American scenery and manners are touched with an able hand...

As regards the characters, it is difficult to find fault with the compliments the reviewer pays to the humorous portraits of Dr. Sitgreaves, Sergeant Hollister and Betty Flanagan, and to the more dignified ones of Frances Wharton, Mr. Wharton and Miss Peyton. Of the former he says : « These personages are evidently favourites with the author, and, when such is the case, they can hardly fail to be so with the reader », while the latter are thus appreciated :

The laughter and liberty-loving Frances is equal to most of

(4) Cf. pp. 121-24 (June 1822).

(5) See, for instance, the *North American Review* for July 1822 (p. 279-80).

the fair forms which have been held up to our admiration by some of the best writers in this class of literature. The quiet portraits of Mr. Wharton and Miss Jeannette Peyton are well drawn, though, perhaps, the former takes too little share in the business of the history.

One would rather complain of the absence of comment upon such characters as Harvey Birch and Captain Lawton. But the silence of the critic may be due to the fact that he did not feel equal to the task of praising the patriotism of unrelenting enemies of his country.

The subject of style is the only one on which this review seems to overstep the bounds of friendly criticism : « ...the style throughout is light and agreeable... Some of the dialogues, however, are too long — the Doctor, for instance, is with us too often. »

It should be noted that, like the *Monthly Censor*, the *Monthly Literary Register* praises the *Spy* for its moral tone : « It is like wise no small praise to add, that the best interests of virtue and religion are practically advocated in its pages ».

In July the *Album*, the *Monthly Magazine and British Register* and the *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review* speak very favourably of the character of Washington as drawn in the *Spy*, and their comments upon the author's patriotism are all equally broad-minded. The *Album* (6) incidentally discusses the *Spy* in a review of *Bracebridge Hall* :

Since the appearance of these works [*Sketch Book* and *History of New York*] the public attention has been considerably turned to the budding literature of America. All have begun to perceive, and some to acknowledge, her advance in this path also. The journals of the United States are beginning to have elegance of expression, equal to the vigour and energy of thought which have long marked them — and a few works of fancy have appeared, which have acquired fame in England. Among these, we must notice a tale entitled « The *Spy* ». The scene — the persons — the incidents — the manners — are all exclusively American — and are sketched with a hand so rapid and masterly, as to excite

the strongest interest even in those most indifferent to that country. The great Washington is introduced with much delicacy and skill — and though the story relates entirely to the latter part of the American war, — and is told, of course, with some manifestations of national pride, — yet there is nothing in it which can give offence even to those most sensitively British.

The *Monthly Magazine and British Register* (7) has a short paragraph in its « Literary and Critical Proëmium » :

Amongst the better class of novels which have lately appeared, may be ranked *the Spy, a Tale of the Neutral Ground*, in three volumes, the scene of which is laid in America during her struggle for independence. This work is, on the whole, cleverly written, and contains some able delineations of American scenery and manners. It displays, perhaps, a little transatlantic partiality, but, in the main, it may be considered to present a tolerable fair view of the state of feeling in America at that period. The portrait of Washington is well drawn, and the mild yet firm benignity of his disposition is happily described. The character of Major Dunwoodie, a young soldier in the republican service, and the hero of the piece, is very creditable to the writer.

The *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review* (8) is more elaborate. It considers the author of the *Spy* as a worthy successor of Brown — whose works had just been reprinted in London and were widely reviewed (9) :

Three American editions of « *The Spy* » and a successful American drama founded upon it, attest the popularity this admirable tale enjoys beyond the Atlantic, a popularity which we feel assured will be considerably increased in this country. Since the time of Brown, the celebrated American novelist, whose work we intend noticing in our next, the field of romance has been left untrodden by any American writer, until the author of « *The Spy* » has stepped forth, and, vindicating the claims of his countrymen in the region of fiction, has proved himself a worthy successor of the author of « *Carwin* » and « *Edward Huntley* » (sic).

(7) Cf. p. 549 (July I, 1822).

(8) July 6, 1822, pp. 421-23.

(9) Cf. CAIRNS, p. 193.

There follows a summary of the novel, in which the critic pronounces Washington's character « well-drawn » and states that « The Spy is truly a national tale, and is founded on some events which occurred in that noble struggle by which America became independent. »

The conclusion is almost enthusiastic :

Imperfect as our sketch of this admirable tale avowedly is, it will be sufficient to show that it possesses no ordinary merit, and that, in the interest of the plot, the vigour and liveliness of its description, and in the correct delineation of the various characters, the Spy is one of the best novels that we have met with.

At about the same time Miss EDGEWORTH proves no less enthusiastic in a letter to Mrs. Ruxton (10) :

Quite new scenes and characters, humour and pathos, a picture of America in Washington's time ; a surgeon worthy of Smollett or Moore, and quite different from any of their various surgeons ; and an Irishwoman, Betty Flanagan, incomparable.

It is to be noted, however, that other comments of Miss Edgeworth's, particularly upon Harvey Birch, were probably far less flattering, since they were criticized as follows by R. H. DANA, the elder, in his first letter to Cooper, dated April 2, 1823 :

How could Miss Edgeworth be guilty of so very superficial an observation as that made by her on Harvey Birch ? If a character is marked, like Birch, with strong passions and deep sentiment, it matters not a farthing what's his occupation, or whether he dies on a gallows or in a bed of state. When shall we lay aside our *vulgar* notions of *refinement* and trust to the honest emotions of the heart ! Miss E. is as unfortunate in her instances as in her doctrine. Birch *is* interesting, intensely interesting, and as to Major André (of whom *one* of her mothers knew something) there never was an individual, who in so short a time and without

(10) Cf. C. W. MOULTON (*Literary Criticism*, vol. 5, p. 681) who gives the following indications : « Edgeworth, Maria, 1821, *To Mrs. Ruxton*, July 8 ; *Letters*, vol. II, p. 29 ». Obviously 1821 stands for 1822.

any remarkable art on his part, created such a deep and lasting sympathy — a sympathy strong enough to outlive even the mawkish lament of a Seward (11).

The *New Edinburgh Review* for October 1822 (12) contained a detailed and searching study which was reprinted in the *Philadelphia Portfolio* for March 1823. It begins :

This publication has two claims to our notice — it is an American work of fancy, and it is a tale of America. Its absolute merit might not otherwise have attracted our attention ; for it is as well to say at once that it must not be measured by the gigantic standard of such compositions appealed to in this country. But we should have hailed it, even had it possessed less merit than it does, both because it is a lively picture of American life, and because it is another offering to the muses, in a country where *that* culture is too new to have as yet greatly improved national manners and sentiments, or shed much of its benign influence either on domestic or foreign relations. The « Sketch Book » has roused us, on this side of the water, to a new interest in the progress of transatlantic talent, taste, and genius. From internal evidence, we can judge that « the Spy » is by a different hand, and we are glad of it ; for we love to see, not only the proofs multiplied of the intellectual and moral exaltation of the American people, but the channels diversified for the kindly flow of that genuine sympathy between the mother country and her foris-familiated offspring, for which a generous rivalry and cordial intercourse of genius and taste is but another name. It is [meet], therefore, we should hold American *failures*, even worthy of our attention, and every attempt entitled to our critical aid and indulgent judgment.

Professor Cairns justly claims that this opening paragraph « illustrates the condescending manner of criticism which applies different standards to English and to American writers » (13), but it is worthwhile to note that the *Philadelphia* periodical seems perfectly satisfied with this double standard, since it quotes the « condescending » paragraph and then adds:

(11) Cf. *Correspondence of J. F. C.*, p. 93.

(12) Cf. p. 345.

(13) *Op. cit.*, p. 116.

« Having thus fairly stated Mr. Cooper's claims to notice, the reviewer then proceeds to lay before the reader an analysis of the tale... »

Curiously enough the Scotch critic is more sensitive than his English colleagues as regards the Americanism of the Spy:

The author appears... to care less about a representation of American manners, than an exaltation of American character ; and having the pallet in his own hands, he has been tempted not to spare the colours. The picture, if overcharged, will at least serve the purpose of a standard for the American character in future, and, we may add, we could not wish our own countrymen likewise a better example ; for it is a picture of the most heroic bravery, the most inflexible justice, the sternest duty, the most incorruptible integrity, the strictest faith, the purest patriotism, and the most generous romantic self-devotion. We think, however, that the grand advantage, in the well-known fable, of holding the pencil, is not altogether generously used, in so far as all the specimens of the British character introduced, are brought merely to shadow out and display the American, by the most incredible contrast in the whole range of the moral world ; in short, while all is wise, chivalrous, Roman, Spartan, on one side, there is not a character that is not either weak or wicked on the other. Wellmere is quite overdone. His bigamy and dastardly flight, leaving Lawton in the hands of the banditti, have no parallel.

The general judgment on the novel as a whole is moderately favourable :

We cannot say that the story we have detailed is intensely interesting ; but we are, nevertheless, disposed to ascribe to it a very considerable share of merit, and although in some places it is rather forced, upon the whole, it carries the reader agreeably along from its commencement to its conclusion. It is, in no instance improbable, and although the events do not rise out of each other as in a regularly constructed plot, they have a natural enough course in the circumstances, and serve all the purposes of characteristic painting.

The chief defects are said to lie in the plot, which is often characterized by an insufficiency of motive :

Henry Wharton's conduct, besides involving the grossest neglect of duty when he ought to have been at his post, is so much the foolish, unnecessary act of a mere boy, that its most serious consequences fail to excite our sympathies. Had there been an atom of even duty in his venture, — some important as well as disinterested motive beyond a mere visit, because he had not seen his friends for a year and a half, the scene of his solemn trial would have been enhanced in value, and easily carried to a very high pitch of pathos. This defect of object, as well as motive, attaches to the story in more particulars than one. The Singletons, for example, are pure lumber ; wherefore there is no sympathy with the rise and progress of young Singleton's wounds, or Isabella's unrequited love ; and we shall not be called unfeeling, when we say, that there is rather a relief to the reader when that supernumerary maid is fairly killed out of the way ; there was no room for her, in the fable, more than in the old coach ; and, instead of the emotions which are created by the tragedy of a Gertrude, the truism crosses our thoughts, in spite of ourselves, that if she had stayed at home she would not have been shot. It would, again, have much added to the interest of the bold expedition of Frances to the mysterious hut, that she had had a sensible errand there. She has, when she sets out, no other expectation than to *see* her brother, with all the chances of her visit leading to the discovery of his retreat. Had Elizabeth of Siberia, or Jeanie Deans, had an object less weighty than the pardon respectively of a father and a sister, their toils and dangers would never have fixed our attention for an instant. The fortitude of Frances was as causeless as that of her brother, when he passed the American posts with an old wig on his head, and a patch on his eye. That Washington is in the hut, is alike 'unknown to her and to the reader ; and the scene that ensues is neither necessary to the development or the interest of the plot, nor by any means striking in itself.

The author has also failed to avail himself of the wealth of striking incident offered by the history of the American Revolution :

We go yet farther, and say, that none of the incidents chosen are of a striking kind. If the American war was to be selected, it was surely marked by events and incidents of a much higher character than have here been chosen ; events which might have

been introduced with the most powerful and exciting effect. Nevertheless, there is not one grand passage in the three volumes — not that pathos is not again and again attempted ; but it uniformly fails for want of adequate matter — for want of *dignus nodus*.

The style is found lacking in poetical quality and too often coarse and vulgar :

We rather trace, too, in the passages meant to be exciting, a considerable deficiency in poetical thought, the essential of that eloquence in description, without which the thrill of sympathy, and the tear of feeling, are never put in requisition. There is, throughout, a want of the nameless charm with which a poetical mind invests even a prose narrative. Of this the author himself furnishes a test in his verses ; which are nearly the worst, the most purely prosaic, we have yet seen printed... There is not always good taste polish in the language of the tale, and sometimes very careless and even ungrammatical composition. There was no occasion for denominating Miss Peyton *invariably* « the spinster » ; the appellation repeatedly comes in time to spoil the effect of a pathetic passage, if there had been in it no other element of self-destruction ; and the constant allusion to the disgusting practice of chewing tobacco, and discharging as well as replenishing the mouth, and to other acts and things of the same kind, are, to say the least, ungenteel.

However, the painting of character and the humour of many scenes are redeeming features of the work :

The chief merit of this tale is some original painting of character, and a considerable portion of humour. Dr. Sitgreaves is quite an original sketch. His unregarded entreaties, that Lawton and his troopers would wound their enemies more carefully, with his other theories and experiments, are very amusing ; and his coming out of the flames with the dead body of a robber in his arms, for future dissection, is exceedingly characteristic. Lawton is good, though less new. Hollister and Dame Flanagan we have seen before ; but they are well enacted. The negro is a relief to the group, although his dinner procession is more minute than the occasion warranted. Washington is respectably introduced, though we could have conceived him converted to a much more

striking use. But certainly our chief interest is in the extraordinary Harvey Birch ; the proper hero of the piece. The conception is new, that a man shall sacrifice not only all worldly advantages and comforts, but his *good name*, for his country ; and, it being essential, in his circumstances, to his country's good, that he shall be believed by that country to be a traitor and a scoundrel ; that in the whole course of his life, while generous disinterestedness and fortitude are strong within him, he shall do no act which shall betray these graces, but, in the perfect keeping of his assumed character, appear an avaricious, cunning, cowardly pedlar, until in his old age, when he dies for his country, it is found that he was known in all his virtue to Washington alone, is no doubt the very *acme* of self-devotion. The description is good, and the effect very novel and interesting.

In his conclusion, the critic cannot help evincing his pride in the Scotch Novels, to which the *Spy* indirectly owes its existence :

We have somewhere before said, that it is none of the least of the advantages of the Scottish novels, that they point out to men of genius in other countries a field of characteristic painting, which otherwise might have remained uncultivated. Although our present author, in no particular, borrows the actual produce of the Unknown Novelist's labours, there is a likeness in the implements and the culture, which shows that a good example has been followed. No one can read « *The Spy* » without feeling a moral conviction, that, had not the Scottish Novels led the way, (sic) it would never have been imagined. It is woven on the same frame, although of meaner fabric, and less precious materials. After all, it is a first attempt, which indicates more power than the author has yet put forth ; it is, therefore, superfluous for us to add, that we shall be happy to meet with this American novelist again, with still stronger claims to our encouragement and applause.

In May 1823, the *Album* (14) takes advantage of a review of the *Pioneers* to complete its earlier reference to the *Spy*. It begins by saying that the *Spy* is not a servile imitation of the *Waverley* novels :

(14) Cf. pp. 155-57.

In our review of Bracebridge Hall, we took occasion to notice the Spy. We regarded it as a production of very high merit -- by far the best of the multitudes which have been put forth on the model, and in imitation, of the Great Unknown. When we say, however, that the Spy is written on the model of the Waverley novels -- we would by no means be understood to signify that the imitation is servile or even close. It is a vivid and spirited representation of manners, scenery, and romantic events -- and thence, must necessarily in some degree resemble the *most* spirited and vivid representations of such things that ever were given to the world.

There are, indeed, some parts of the Spy, which would be no discredit to the pen of even the author of Waverley.

The critic then insists on the characters, more particularly that of Captain Lawton, giving high praise to their creator :

The character of Lawton, original as it is, and admirably sustained throughout, is a creation of no ordinary power. When we use the term « admirably sustained throughout », we mean to give much more than common praise -- for we hold it to be a very rare thing to see a character preserved through five acts, or three volumes, in perfect keeping and harmony. Minor artists frequently give a formal and elaborate description at the beginning, which in the sequel is forgotten, if not contradicted ; and without which our ideas of the character portrayed would be to the last degree vague, and imperfect. It is the master-hand only, which gives no catalogue of qualities ; but, by a succession of rapid touches, makes actions and words place the doer and speaker before you. This is done to a very peculiar extent in the character of which we speak -- and we cite it more particularly from its being (with the exception, perhaps, of the negro, who is, we conclude, a local transcript) the most original in the book. It is the more so, we think, from the very circumstance that in broad outline the conception is by no means a new one. It is the completely novel form into which used materials are thrown, together with the minute and delicate, yet rapid and apparently unstudied, shadings, that gives to Lawton so individual and original an aspect. In less skilful hands, he would have been either a mere ruffian, or the bluff good-humoured soldier, which are both so common ; -- but this author has softened his boldness -- even fierceness -- and his terrible bodily power, with so much jovial humour, and kind-heartedness -- and has thrown

so much of romance into his daring and desperate exploits, that he has produced the very beau-idéal of a *condottiere* of modern times — a guerilla chief of English warfare. The Surgeon is a most amusing piece of fantastic sketching ; while the Spy himself possesses all the interest without any of the novelism of mystery.

Betty Flanagan is the best Moll Flaggon we remember to have met with, and the imperturbable Serjeant Hollister is one of those slight sketches in which the hand of a master is forcibly shewn...

The skill, too, with which the great Washington is introduced is very admirable. It needs, indeed, very great skill to touch upon such ground at all in America ; — for we have been told that an attempt once made to bring the character of Washington on the stage, was received with an indignation, and even horror, little short, as our informant said, of what would have been felt at a proposal similarly to personify the Saviour of mankind.

The novel, however, is said to have other merits, which are rapidly enumerated :

But it is not in character alone that this work asserts its superiority. The description of localities is graphic in an extraordinary degree, — and the adventures, which are extremely romantic, and in very quick succession, are given with great happiness and vigour... The death of the Spy's father evinces a power of pathos which, from its infrequent use, we should scarcely have imagined this author to possess, and which we should be glad to see more often introduced among his vigorous sketchings of character and the felicitous and dramatic action of his story. (15)

In January 1824 — also in a review of the *Pioneers* — the *Newcastle Magazine* (16) speaks very highly of the Spy, which is not, however, the reviewer's favourite :

This is the second novel of its author.. [it] is well written, and considering the scenes which it describes, exceedingly interesting ; but the *Pioneers* will be more prized in proportion as its subject

(15) A few lines further on, while speaking of the *Pioneers*, the critic also praises the dialogue in the Spy : « ... and the dialogue (a merit, and a great one, which we have omitted to notice above) is quite as spirited and natural as in the former production ».

(16) Cf. p. 35.

is more peculiarly American. The Spy was a tale of Washington's wars, in which that hero was most characteristically introduced, and in which the English and American characters, both private and military, were skilfully contrasted..

A few months later, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* for October 1824 prints JOHN NEAL's appreciations of his fellow-countryman Cooper. The Spy is praised as a whole, but the tone of Neal's criticism is as usual particularly unpleasant and provoking :

THE SPY — the most popular novel ever produced in that country, by a native, is very good — as a whole : but rather too full of stage-tricks and clap-traps. Thus, The SPY himself — (who is a failure, by the way — a dead hum — anything might have been made of him, after the allusion to his father — nothing *is*) — appears whenever he is *not* expected — it is a pretty rule in the drama — bad in a novel : and swallows, among other matters, a protection, given *to* save his life — just when the time arrives, *for* which it was given ; and where nothing else *can* save him : — the disguises ; the pathos ; the love-parts ; the heroicks — are all contemptible. In other matters, it is a capital novel (17).

In the same magazine for September 1825 JOHN NEAL again comments upon the Spy in a review of *Lionel Lincoln*. His tone, of course, is unchanged :

Let him have praise for the « SPY ; » because a part of the story was American, though most of the characters were not ; being either Irish, or English, or nothing ; yea, — though he did venture to make George Washington play bo-peep with a pretty girl ; between two great armies, both of which were sadly in want of him ; after night-fall, too, on the « neutral ground, » which was eternally overrun by the British ; yea, — though Mr. Cooper did set the mighty rebel down, like a good boy, to study geography, with a map of the world before him — on the top of a huge mountain — altogether alone — at night — with about fifteen or twenty thousand people, on the look out for him, if he stirred or winked ; yea — yea — though Mr. Cooper did leave

him, for a great while, gossiping with a tory — under a fictitious name, too — in disguise — alone — away and afar from all hope, or chance of relief or escape. Think of that ! George Washington ; the rebel commander-in-chief — playing a part, and such a part — in such a place, at such a time.

So ; let him have all praise for the « SPY, » in spite of this and a heap more of like absurdity, which we might gather from it, and fill up to overshadow him — if such employment were worthy of us ; or if he were not a favourite with all, who candidly appreciate his power ; and of course ; therefore, with ourself. The book was, at least, an approach to what we desire — a plain, real hearty, North American story ; a story, which, if we could have our way, should be altogether American — peculiarly and exclusively so, throughout ; as much American, to say all, in a word, as the Scotch Novels are Scotch : Let him have great praise ; for, to give him his due, the « Spy » did, in truth, spy out a new empire for his countrymen ; riches and power, in a new shape ; a world of generous ore, which only requires to be wrought — having been smelted, with subterranean fires, half a century ago, while the nations above were asleep (18).

In the same month, the *Gentleman's Magazine* incidentally states that the *Spy* is to be ranked above the *Pioneers* and the *Pilot*, and that « the characters of Captain Lawton and Doctor Sitgreaves are depicted with both truth and humour » (19).

The *British Critic* for July 1826 (20) naturally devotes several pages to the *Spy* in an important article on « American Novels ». A synopsis of the story is followed by a flattering passage on the merits the work possesses as a collection of thrilling incidents :

Such is the main thread of « The Spy », enlivened by a perpetual succession of spirit stirring adventures and desperate escapes, which will be impressed on the minds of those who have read the book, and whose effect on those who have not read it we will not mar by extracts ; wishing however to call their attention more

(18) Cf. p. 325 (*Late American Books*).

(19) Cf. pp. 197-98 (*Present State of Literature*).

(20) Cf. pp. 430-32.

particularly to the grotesque disguise of Birch as a fanatical preacher, the dexterity with which, under this character, he rescues Wharton from under the very pistols of his captors, and lastly the execution of the Skinner captain, which is worked up in a manner reminding us of the drowning of the wretched Morris.

With regard to the characters, the author is blamed for having represented an English colonel as a cowardly knave, thus departing from his usual impartiality :

We cannot, speaking as mere cosmopolites., approve of the portrait of colonel Wellmere. Knowing as we do that cool arrogance is as much the vice of this country, as jealous gasconading vanity is that of Brother Jonathan, we can easily suppose that the conduct of our young officers may have aggravated the exasperation which existed at the time in question ; but to represent an English colonel as a mere petty larceny knave, deficient, in common spirit, is a ridiculous attempt. With the exception of this piece of bad judgment, Mr. Cooper, though touching on inflammable matter, has not overstept the limits of that reasonable partiality to his own country, which he may fairly be allowed to feel.

But the portrait of Harvey Birch is greatly commended :

Nor does he depart from the modesty of nature in his conception of Harvey Birch, the real and effective hero of the story... Nor is there any thing fine or romantic introduced to break the consistency of Birch's demeanour as a rough ordinary pedlar. His address is dry and coarse, his appearance repulsive ; his delicacy is not very troublesome either in driving a bargain, or in obtaining English guineas under false pretences ; and he loves the said guineas better than any thing else excepting his country and his bedridden father. An inferior author would not have avoided making him much too gentlemanly for his business ; but Mr. Cooper has kept him strictly down to his humble rank, and yet rendered him the most interesting person in the book.

The critic concludes with a few interesting remarks on the songs interspersed throughout the story, wherein he shows,

himself far less severe than the writer of the article in the *New Edinburgh* :

We have not leisure to remark upon Dr. Sitgreaves, the prescriptive hero of the piece, and his Galenical song, which however is better than the strain of woful namby-pamby that escapes from Dunwoodie in a luckless hour. To this the reader will find an agreeable contrast in the touching little stanza which forms the motto to poor Lawton's death-chapter. It is taken from Halleck, a poet of whom we would fain know more, if he always write thus. We must also find room for a rough spice of the said Lawton's leaguer-muse, which is nearly as good as in a different way :

« Now push the mug, my jolly boys... »

The *Liverpool Repository* for the same month (21), in a review of the *Mohicans*, considers the Spy superior to some at least of the novels of the « Wizard of the North », especially because it is no mere work of entertainment but a work capable of improving the mind of the reader :

If he had written no other work than « The Spy », he would have deserved the applause of the friends of literature, in having furnished a tale so worthy of perusal, at once placing him on an honourable footing of rivalry with our « Wizard of the North », and though it be inferior to some of the *best* productions of the latter, yet it is decidedly superior to some of his *worst*.

In books of this description, entertainment, an easy flow of language, purity of diction, an interesting and well-contrived chain of events, spirited delineation of character, and agreeable episodes, are as much as the generality of readers expects to find in them. Yet there is a higher order of intellectual gratification, at which authors ought to aim, the information and instruction of the minds of those by whom their works are perused — and it is chiefly in this respect that the author of the Scotch novels frequently fails ; for after reading several of his productions, they leave no more impression behind them than a morning dream ; we vainly strive to render something permanent from them, but the effort is as unavailing, as to attempt to detain the shadows of

(21) Cf. pp. 385-86.

evening, which are progressively lost in twilight, and succeeded by midnight darkness. We cannot say that this has been the case after perusing *The Spy*, which glowingly describes events during the progress of the American war, and gives a fine delineation of the character of General Washington.

The *Edinburgh Literary Journal* for August 29, 1829, in an article on « Cooper's American Novels » (22), also says that the *Spy* « contains a beautiful picture of Washington ».

The *Spirit of Literature* for October 30, 1830 (23) incidentally discusses the *Spy* in a review of the *Water Witch*, but not always in a very friendly manner :

This novel is remarkable among Mr. C's collection, not only as being the one which raised him to eminence, but as being the only one in which he has made a successful attempt at humour. There is really some laughability in « Captain Lawton », « Betty Flanagan », and « Dr. Sitgreaves »...

The plot of the « *Spy* » is also better managed by far than that of any of the novels which follow it. Its popularity was consequently unbounded.

The passages on the Americanism of the work are very ironical :

In the « *Spy* » Mr. Cooper found the secret of his strength. It lies in being Yankee to the back-bone. His own countrymen, of course, like him the better for it ; the French, German, and other continentals, take pleasure in it ; and it is no disrecommendation with the English. His occasional abuse of the latter has the same effect. There is perhaps, no more saleable commodity in the world than abuse of the English. Mr. C. showed, therefore, great judgment, when in the « *Spy* » he made his American officers all patriotism and perfection, and chose his villain out of the ranks of the English army...

One thing, which must strike every one, is the author's singular tone of national morality. In the « *Spy* », indeed, we saw, that however a common ruffian of that description might excite his abhorrence, yet a double traitor, who, while pretending to

(22) Cf. pp. 171-73.

(23) Cf. pp. 425-28.

be of the English party, secretly betrayed their cause to the Americans, appeared to him a patriot « above all Greek, above all Roman fame ».

Harvey is, on the contrary, a favourite character with the author of the great article on Cooper in Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine* for April 1831 (24) :

Early associations lead us to estimate *The Spy* very highly, and incline us to cherish the remembrance of Harvey Birch with feelings as profound as any that have been excited by more recent adventurers. Washington also is a richly-coloured portrait, touched with the hand of an enthusiast.

A reprint of the *Spy*, as number three of Colburn's collection of Standard Novels, was not productive of much valuable criticism. The *Atlas* for May 22, 1831 praises the work for its stirring character but objects to the style of the first edition, which is said to have been considerably improved in Colburn's reprint (25). The *Monthly Review* for June (26) is very perfunctory. After mentioning Cooper's new introduction, and his revelations on the prototype of Harvey Birch, it adds : « The tale itself has long been known in England, and, though unequal in its style and interest, it, nevertheless, deserves a place among modern standard novels ».

Later references to the *Spy* are very scarce. *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* for September 1832, in a review of the *Heidenmauer*, has a few interesting comments on the character of Washington :

His Washington is the finest and truest picture of that man of men we have met with ; dear friends of ours, who enjoyed the high privilege of knowing the original, have pronounced it excellent. Still it is but a portrait. It wants the vitality which the genius of Cooper has bestowed upon the characters which bustle around it. It reminds us, painfully, of the theatre, with its half

(24) Cf. p. 360.

(25) Cf. p. 348.

(26) Cf. p. 308. This notice, according to CAIRNS, is also to be found in the May number (p. 145).

reality, half show — its living men and women, and pasteboard waterfalls (27).

On August 1, 1849, the *Critic* mentions the publication of the Spy in Routledge's *Railway Library* but without any comments on the work (28).

On the occasion of Cooper's death, however, the *Gentleman's Magazine* says of the Spy :

It is, doubtless, one of the most powerful historical tales ever written, and is regarded, by many, as the best work of its author (29).

(27) Cf. p. 661.

(28) Cf. p. 355.

(29) Cf. November 1851, p. 546.

France

The Spy was the first of Cooper's works to be translated by Defauconpret, already famous as the translator of the Waverley novels. His translation was published in Paris by Charles Gosselin, the French editor of these same novels, and warmly welcomed in the *Miroir des Spectacles, des Lettres, des Mœurs et des Arts* for September 1, 1822. Unfortunately the style of the reviewer is lacking in precision. One gathers, however that the unflagging interest of the story, and the able delineation of most characters, are considered the principal merits of the work, while the length of some conversations and the style of the translation are accounted its most serious blemishes. It does not appear clearly whether the attribution of the novel to Fanny Wright originated in London or in Paris:

A un intérêt de localité vif et soutenu se lient des détails qui ont une sorte de caractère officiel, sur les grands événements politiques et militaires de la première guerre d'Amérique. Les caractères des principaux personnages et ceux de quelques personnages secondaires sont dessinés avec une piquante originalité qui rappelle la manière de Walter Scott. *L'Espion* a, dit-on, paru à Londres sans nom d'auteur. On l'attribue à Miss Wright déjà connue dans le monde littéraire par un voyage aux Etats-Unis, qui eut en son temps beaucoup de succès (1).

L'histoire de *L'Espion* est fort attachante ; nous rangerons ce roman dans la classe de ceux dont on interrompt à regret la lecture une fois qu'on en connaît deux ou trois chapitres. Peut-être les personnages parlent-ils quelquefois un peu trop (quoique toujours

(1) In *Bryant and his Friends*, J. G. WILSON quotes HALLECK as saying : « When I was in Paris... « The Spy » was attributed to Miss Fanny Wright, a Scotch lady who was for a time a public lecturer in the United States, on morals and religion from a somewhat infidel point of view ». (p. 236).

avec originalité) ; peut-être aussi le traducteur a-t-il trop souvent négligé la construction et l'*arrangement* de ses phrases ; mais ces taches sont légères. *L'Espion* doit réussir à cause de son titre, ou plutôt malgré son titre.

It is probable that the French critics did not long remain in the dark as to the real author of the Spy, for the next references to the novel are to be met with in general articles on Cooper's works. In the *Journal des Débats* for November 21, 1823 Charles NODIER incidentally claims that Harvey Birch is perhaps as original as any of Scott's finest characters : « L'Espion égale peut-être en originalité ses conceptions les plus habilement soutenues ». On the contrary, the *Globe* for March 12, 1825, in an article signed E.T., is of opinion that the character of the spy is too melodramatic. Its general appreciation of the novel is nevertheless very favourable :

M. Cooper nous a révélé son vrai talent dans *L'Espion* : C'est un roman national dont le cadre est heureux, la fable intéressante et les détails neufs et amusants. L'auteur n'y a pas imité seulement Walter Scott romancier, mais encore Walter Scott poète ; Washington joue dans *L'Espion* un rôle qui rappelle l'inconnu du roi Jacques dans *La Dame du Lac*.

M. Cooper fait preuve déjà dans cet ouvrage d'un grand talent dramatique. Le rôle de *L'Espion* n'est pas le mieux tracé, c'est un vrai personnage de mélodrame ; mais il y a de la vie et de l'originalité dans les autres personnages sur lesquels il exerce une espèce de protection mystérieuse, tout proscriit qu'il est lui-même (2).

It must be added, however, that on July 2, 1827, the same periodical prints an article signed F.A.S. which is loud in its praise of both Harvey Birch and Washington :

Son second ouvrage, *L'Espion*, fonda sa renommée. Ici commence la peinture, pleine d'intérêt et frappante de vérité de la société américaine. Le drame est plein de mouvement et de vie. La grande figure de l'Espion, qui domine sur tout le tableau, est une conception neuve, forte, et profondément morale. Notre

mémoire ne nous rappelle dans les romans écossais aucun caractère moralement plus beau... Certains lecteurs difficiles ont jugé au-dessous de Washington le rôle qui lui est attribué dans ce drame. Quant à nous, nous trouvons son rôle constamment digne. Il apparaît de loin en loin comme une sorte de génie bienfaisant d'un ordre supérieur ; et ce rôle nous semble assez d'accord avec cette glorieuse auréole dont l'histoire a déjà entouré sa tête (3).

In November of the same year, the *Revue Encyclopédique* also speaks with enthusiasm of the character of Harvey, and comments as follows on the moral of the story :

Nous ne pouvons dissimuler que la lecture de ce livre laisse dans l'âme ce sentiment pénible que fait toujours naître un déni de justice ; mais, à le considérer sous le rapport moral, il est difficile d'en trouver un plus propre à élever l'âme, et à nous inspirer, au milieu de nos bonnes actions, ce désintéressement, cet oubli de nous-mêmes qui en double la valeur (4).

The same article considers that Captain Lawton, like Long Tom Coffin in the *Pilot*, is « une véritable création ». This is perhaps saying a great deal, as Mr. Morris remarks (5), but it should be borne in mind that Captain Lawton was often highly praised, especially by certain British periodicals.

About a year later, the performance of two rival dramatized versions of the *Spy* gave rise to a good deal of comment. The version by MM. Ancelot and Mazères, performed at the *Théâtre Français*, was generally deemed superior to the hasty work of Léon Halévy and Fontan played at the *Odéon*. A review of the latter, in the *Globe* for December 10, 1828, is interesting for us because it contrasts the character of Harvey Birch, as conceived by Cooper, with the bombastic character represented on the *Odéon* stage :

Tout le monde connaît *l'Espion*, de Cooper, cette hardie et originale conception, si pleine de scènes vives et pathétiques qui

(3) Cf. p. 205.

(4) Cf. p. 351.

(5) *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

semblent n'avoir besoin que d'être détachées d'un livre pour être applaudies au théâtre...

C'est une grande et belle idée de Cooper que d'avoir montré comment la sainteté de la plus juste cause peut tout ennoblir et comment l'amour exalté de la patrie peut élever jusqu'à l'héroïsme la plus vile et la plus méprisée des conditions. Et, de fait, quand on a été témoin de toutes les fatigues, de tous les dangers, de toutes les avanies, que supporte en silence le pauvre Harvey Birch... quand on a vu son sang-froid, son adresse, ses craintes, et enfin sa mort, qui, grâce à Dieu, est celle d'un brave, on est tout surpris de se sentir de la pitié et de la sympathie pour un être qui ne semblait pouvoir inspirer que de l'horreur et du dégoût. L'auteur américain est si sûr, avant la fin du livre, d'avoir opéré ce prodige, qu'il ne craint pas de faire comparaître dans une même scène cet humble serviteur de l'Amérique auprès du grand, du sage, du respecté Washington, et, dans cette conférence extraordinaire, Harvey Birch, jeté au dernier degré de l'échelle morale dont Washington occupe le faite, Harvey Birch se soutient sans désavantage devant cette figure majestueuse et patriotique...

Les auteurs [du drame]... ont commis la faute impardonnable d'avoir mis dans sa bouche de grandes phrases de patriotisme et d'honneur. Comment n'ont-ils pas senti, en lisant Cooper, que la plus grande partie de l'effet que produit ce caractère vient de l'absence de toute emphase, de toute déclamation. Harvey sert, souffre et meurt sans chercher à se disculper, sans apologie ni plaintes. Il n'est au-dessus de l'ignominie que parce qu'il la surmonte par la force d'un sentiment qui serait trop faible si ses paroles pouvaient l'exprimer (6).

In 1839 G. DE SAINT FARGEAU's *Revue des Romans* outlines the story of Harvey Birch, but fails to comment upon the novel itself beyond implying that it is not one of Cooper's very best works : « *L'Espion* est le premier roman qui ait fait connaître le talent de Cooper, talent qui s'est élevé à une grande hauteur dans ses autres productions » (7).

Two years later, on the contrary, Ch. ROMÉY's detailed appreciation of the Spy, in his introduction to *Mercédès de Castille*, waxes at times almost enthusiastic :

(6) Cf. pp. 887-88.

(7) Cf. p. 231.

Dans *L'Espion*, la guerre de l'indépendance et le patriotisme de ce temps d'héroïques efforts sont retracés sans exagération, mais aussi avec une touche vive et un peu âpre par endroits, qui convient à merveille à la peinture de cette glorieuse époque. La grande figure de Washington, qui domine le fond du tableau, y apparaît avec toutes les éminentes qualités de son excellente nature : l'héroïsme calme, la modestie, et, si l'on peut ainsi dire, toute l'auguste simplicité caractéristique du héros américain. Harvey Birch, l'espion, n'est pas une figure de moindre mérite. C'est peut-être la plus dramatique création de Cooper ; car Harvey Birch n'a pas fait seulement à son pays le sacrifice de sa vie. Né avec de hautes facultés, un cœur généreux et chaud, l'instinct des nobles choses, il se résout pour sa patrie à la perte de son honneur ; il consent à être la plus basse et la plus vile chose de ce monde, *espion*. Le mot dit tout. Et en lui-même cependant, lorsqu'il considère à quel but il tend par l'exercice de son métier infâme, cet homme ne peut se mépriser ; il trouve en son cœur de quoi se consoler, et, dans son opprobre, le sentiment des services qu'il rend à son pays lui tient lieu de tout, le paie de ses souffrances, de ses périls, et rachète suffisamment à ses yeux son honneur à jamais perdu selon le monde — Le même genre d'intérêt, à savoir l'intérêt dramatique, qui ressort de la lutte intérieure de deux principes qui se disputent l'homme, ne se retrouve pas au même degré dans les autres ouvrages de Cooper...

In 1844 LOUIS DE LOMÉNIE (8) may be said to side with G. de Saint Fargeau, but he takes care to justify his opinion. If he approves of the characters of Captain Lawton and Dr. Sitgreaves, he is not entirely satisfied with Harvey Birch, Washington and the Wharton sisters :

Bien que le personnage principal d'Harwey-Birtch (sic), l'héroïque Porte-Balle, l'espion sublime qui sacrifie à la patrie non-seulement sa vie, mais son honneur, soit un peu forcé et peu homogène, et bien que l'auteur ait cru devoir faire figurer dans ce roman, d'une manière assez malheureuse et dans un rôle tout à fait secondaire, Washington lui-même, sous le pseudonyme de Harper, il y a, dans cette production, de la vérité, de la variété, de la vie. Les deux figures de femmes sont un peu ternes, mais le caractère du capitaine Lawton, le sabreur Virginien, est vigou-

(8) Cf. *Galerie des Contemporains illustres*, vol. 8, pp. 10-11.

reusement accusé. Le docteur Sitgreaves, avec ses sollicitudes anatomiques, est assez plaisant. Cependant cet ouvrage ne saurait être classé en première ligne parmi les romans de Cooper.

Less enthusiastic than Charles Romey, but very much impressed by Harvey Birch, whom he praises in the same terms as his predecessor, PHILARÈTE CHASLES might be considered as steering a middle course between Romey and St. Fargeau in his *Etudes sur la Littérature et les Mœurs des Anglo-Américains au XIX^e siècle* (1851) :

L'Espion a ses partisans. *Harvey Birch* est une création dramatique : sacrifier à son pays non-seulement sa vie, mais son honneur, c'est le plus grand des sacrifices. Comment ne pas admirer ce héros du patriotisme qui se fait de son infâmie une gloire et se console au fond de l'âme de l'opprobre qui le couvre, par le sentiment des services qu'il rend à son pays. Quant à Washington, Cooper a su l'idéaliser avec un rare talent ; ce qui n'était point facile (9).

But this view of the matter would be completely false, for one is confronted here with a complicated and rather sad case of plagiarism. In fact Philarète Chasles did not appropriate Romey's comments upon Harvey Birch, it is the reverse which is true. And yet the greater plagiarist in this affair is not Romey but Chasles !

The solution of this literary puzzle seems to be as follows : The paragraph we have just quoted was first printed in the *Revue Britannique* for January 1831, towards the end of a long article on Cooper, which was formally acknowledged as taken from Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine*. Ph. Chasles being at that time on the staff of the *Revue*, it is almost certain that he was entrusted with the translation of the English article into French. But this translation was often a very free one, indeed, and Ph. Chasles may therefore have fancied that he was entitled to include it in his collected writings, where

it actually constitutes two-thirds of his chapter on Cooper (10).

Ch. Romey did not proceed on such a large scale, but he certainly made very free with Chasles' translation in the *Revue Britannique*. He is far too sparing of quotation marks for our modern taste and, when he does use them, one is sorry to see that he refers his French readers to *Colburn's Magazine* but avoids mentioning the translation which was within their reach (11).

(10) It should be added that other parts of this same chapter follow very closely the *Edinburgh Review* for October 1829. (Cf. pp. 128-29 of the review of W. E. Channing's *Sermons and Tracts*, parts of which are quoted in our chapter on the *Mohicans*).

(11) G. D. MORRIS, in his doctoral dissertation on *Fenimore Cooper et Edgar Poe d'après la critique française du dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris, Larose 1912), comments upon the opinions expressed by Romey and Chasles without linking them with the article in the *Revue Britannique*. Miss M. M. GIBB, in her more recent work : *Le Roman de Bas-de-Cuir, Etude sur Fenimore Cooper et son influence en France* (Paris, Champion 1927), mentions this article but seems to consider it as an original and very significant piece of work (p. 140), and even as a typical expression of French sentiment on certain controverted points (elaborate descriptions, p. 143 ; women characters, p. 145).

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the world-wide popularity of the Spy, the interest English and French critics took in it does not appear to have survived the death of Cooper. But American criticism — after the somewhat inglorious hesitations of the first months — has never ceased to comment favourably upon the fountain-head of American historical romance.

English reviews of the new work are very abundant in 1822 and lengthy comments upon it occur frequently enough during the next ten years. But the short notices called forth in 1831 by the incorporation of the Spy into Colburn's collection of Standard Novels may not unaptly be compared to the last flicker of a dying flame, later references to the Spy being exceedingly scarce.

It is a remarkable fact that, among the numerous British periodicals we have quoted, only two — the *New Edinburgh Review* (1822) and the *Spirit of Literature* (1830) — find fault with Cooper's patriotism as expressed in his first American novel. All the others show themselves particularly broad-minded on this delicate question.

The same broad-mindedness is noticeable in connection with the British appreciations of the Spy from a general literary point of view. Though not blind to its numerous imperfections, the reviewers prefer to insist on its striking qualities, and, instead of making capital out of the author's indebtedness to the Great Unknown, they often take pains to point out that Cooper is no « servile imitator ». The most conspicuous exception is the *New Edinburgh Review*, which says that the Spy « must not be measured by the gigantic standards appealed to in Great Britain » and that « had not the Scottish novels led the way, it would never have been imagined. »

Under these circumstances it was difficult for French critics to give the *Spy* a much warmer welcome than the one it had received at British hands. Still, the French comments being rather short, most of the space was necessarily devoted to the praise of the work in general, little room being left for the enumeration of its faults. For this reason it might be claimed that the French reviewers were, on the whole, somewhat more favourable than the British. It should be observed, however, that French criticisms of the *Spy* were few and far between, and too often lacking in originality.

With regard to the reception of the *Spy* in the United States, we hope we have shown with sufficient clearness : 1. that the book was a success from the start so far as the general public was concerned ; 2. that the critics — with very few exceptions — dared not commit themselves before England had spoken ; 3. that the *North American* is certainly to be blamed for having failed to give adequate encouragement to a promising American author but that its review of the *Spy* — considered merely as a piece of literary criticism — is a remarkable achievement.

That the *Spy* was not thrown into the shade by its famous successors, even in critical estimation, is established by the testimony of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, which stated in June 1838 that it ranked « as one of the first of the Cooperian novels ». In 1845, however, W G. SIMMS noted with regret that it was « somewhat the practice... to disparage that story ». This shows that the changing literary fashions must have influenced, from time to time, the fortunes of the work ; but later documents, ranging from GRISWOLD's *Prose Writers of America* (1847) to an article in the *Outlook* for December 1901, bear witness to the permanent hold of the *Spy* on the American public, and to its lasting fame as a symbol of the literary emancipation of the United States.

It should be added that the selection of the *Spy* as a textbook, appointed for use in many schools, has confirmed its permanent value for the study of American History and American Literature. Besides the detailed appreciation JOHN ERSKINE published in 1910 is a sign that, viewed in the light of modern

criticism, the *Spy* may sometimes appear far less imperfect than it did in Cooper's day.

On the whole, however, the critics of the three nations concur as regards the principal merits and the main defects of the *Spy*. All of them, for instance, might subscribe to this judgment of the *North American* : « The particular talent of our author, seems to lie in describing action and hitting off the humors of low life. » In the same way none could seriously quarrel with the *English Gazette of Fashion and Magazine of the Fine Arts* when it says : « It has been written, perhaps, in haste, evidently without much care ; a coarseness of conception, defective style and a vicious composition, which sometimes outrages grammatical propriety, are among its most prominent blemishes. »

Divergences of opinion occur with regard to minor points. Concerning the *plot*, the *Monthly Literary Register* (E. 1822) complains that there is « no distinct hero in the piece », but MISS M. E. KINGSLEY, in her *Outline Study of the Spy* (A. 1921), points out that : « No action important to the development of the story takes place without the intervention of Harvey Birch ». MRS. SARAH HALL, in 1821, calls the epilogue « a lame and impotent conclusion » (1) while MISS KINGSLEY, one hundred years later, declares that it is « artistic ». MRS HALL also condemns the introduction of Washington into a novel and the part he is made to play in it. She is followed by the *North American*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, BRYANT, and COOPER himself. On the other hand most English and French critics, together with modern Americans like L. H. VINCENT, JOHN ERSKINE and CARL VAN DOREN, are of an entirely different opinion. The repetition of incidents almost similar, considered as a proof of « gross negligence » by the *North American*, is deemed a mark of genius by JOHN ERSKINE. Finally, the critic of the *New Edinburgh Review* for October 1822 is the only one to call attention to a frequent insufficiency of motive, which he considers the greatest blemish in the plot.

(1) In the *Philadelphia Portfolio*

Cooper's achievement in the *painting of character* is generally declared far superior to his success in the conduct of the story. CARL VAN DOREN, however, is a conspicuous exception. Harvey Birch is very much admired in America and France, still the *North American* characterizes him as « a grand conception... imperfectly executed », while the *Globe* -calls him « un vrai personnage de mélodrame ». Naturally enough some of the English critics do not feel inclined to expatiate on the virtues of this unusual hero, but the *Spirit of Literature* stands in a class by itself when it blames Cooper for having mistaken a double traitor » for a patriot. Captain Lawton, on the contrary, is very highly praised in the *Gazette of Fashion* (1822) and the *Album* (1823) — much more so than in any American periodical. The humorous characters, men and women, are general favourites in England and America, but the French critics hardly mention them. The remaining female characters, deemed « feeble » by the *Gazette of Fashion*, are stoutly defended by JOHN ERSKINE. Besides, the heroine has found many admirers, some of them quite warm indeed.

Strangely enough the *style* is praised in two English periodicals, the *Modern Literary Register* (1822) and the *Album* (1823), but it is, at the same time, severely criticized by the *New Edinburgh Review* and above all by the *North American*. Some reviewers ascribe its defects to haste (*North American Review*, 1822, *Gazette of Fashion*, E. 1822), others, like MRS. SARAH HALL, try to minimize them, but the majority avoid the subject altogether.

THE PIONEERS

America

Notwithstanding the record sale of 3,500 copies of the *Pioneers* on the morning of its publication in New York City (1), this third work of Cooper's did not, in the long run, prove very successful with the American public at large. The author's autobiographical notes contain two passages which are positive on this point :

The *Pioneers* followed *The Spy*, in 1822. Its success was far from being striking, and it was thought the author was « written out ». The character of Natty Bumppo, however, took very well, and did much for the book...

The *Pioneers* succeeded *The Spy*, in about a twelvemonth. It was only moderately successful ; its present popularity being in a good degree factitious. It never has been a work of *loyal* success, though criticism has rather favored it. At first, it was thought a failure...

The first morning's success was due, partly to the fact that many enthusiastic readers of the *Spy* were anxious to purchase the next production of the « American Novelist », and partly to the feeling of curiosity aroused by the publication of a few extracts from the coming work in several of the daily papers. This is borne out by the reminiscences of a contributor to the *Literary World* for May 5, 1849 (p. 394) :

One of the happiest half-hours a book ever gave us, we owe

(1) *Vide ante*, Part I., p. 18.

to that admirable custom which our newspapers once followed, of giving us a foretaste of every new publication while it was on its way through the press. It was when the world was looking eagerly for something new from the author of the *Spy*. The « *Pioneers* » was announced, and before it got fully into the world, the « wild cat » scene was published in a New York daily. It was our first glance into an American forest, and our first shake of the hand with Leatherstocking. We were somewhat younger then than we are now, and had not reached that privileged age in which you are allowed to be the first to seize upon the newspaper. But we were allowed to hear it read, and never shall we forget the feelings with which we watched the efforts of poor old « *Brave* » (for it seemed as if we were looking on, instead of listening), nor the terror which we felt, as the wild cat turned from his dead body to glance at that of her young, and then back again to the defenceless maiden, nor the thrill of delight with which we heard old « *Leatherstocking's* » words — « Stoop your head lower, gall, your bonnet hides the creature's head. »

As regards the periodicals, the *Portfolio* was naturally among the very first to give a favourable review of the new work (2). Still the critic could not help regretting that the author should have neglected to gratify the public taste for stirring and pathetic scenes :

He... who opens these volumes with an expectation of being enchained by a fascinating tale and agitated by critical conjunctures... will most assuredly be disappointed... His feelings will not be excited by any romantic trials of friendship or love. These the author has avoided, although « *The Spy* » contains ample evidence that he possesses the power of delineating tender scenes with great pathos and effect. We think a few pages of this description would have increased his popularity : but he seems to have turned away with a sort of churlishness, not belonging to his character, from our gratification in this respect.

Following however the precept of Pope, the reviewer proceeds to examine the *Pioneers* in the light of the intentions of its author. Viewed from this angle, the work is to be

praised both as a « descriptive tale » and as a faithful historical picture of the American settlements :

The work is truly, what it professes to be, « a descriptive tale ; » and it is by the laws of that species of composition that its merits are to be scanned. It might, indeed, be called historical ; for the historian can scarcely find a more just and vivid delineation of the first settlements of our wilderness...

The removal of forests of immense magnitude ; the creation of flourishing towns and cultivated fields, where but a few years before those forests stood, are events now so familiar to us, that they scarcely excite surprise. But we perceive the effects without an exact knowledge of the means by which they have been produced. The *Pioneers* affords us much of this information, imparted with a fidelity and vividness that carry the reader into the midst of the scenes, and make him acquainted with every individual who is introduced. These individuals will all be found in good keeping ; not deformed by caricature nor frittered away by extravagance. Each one speaks and acts with perfect fitness and congruity, and they are, as we can testify from personal observation, the very kind of persons who may be expected to be found in such situations...

The descriptions throughout of the appearance and scenery of the country, are highly wrought and very striking.

The old hunter, Natty Bumppo, is the first character to be analysed in detail, and with comments particularly felicitous :

His companion, we think, has been modelled from the effigies of old Daniel Boone, who abandoned the society of his kindred and built a hut among the Indians ; and persisted in removing further into the interior as the path of civilization *invaded* his wild domains. Either of Natty's names is an odd one for a hero ; but a hero he is, if courage, fidelity, and a spirit of independence, unbroken by a life of suffering, can make him so. His character, habits and opinions were formed by the course of his life, but they were raised on a foundation of fine materials...

This demi-savage is constantly seen in bold relief, separated from all the others by the singularity of his opinions, the inflexibility with which he maintains them, and a manliness of spirit and wild virtue, that command respect even in a being so rude and so humble, so ignorant and unpolished.

Among the humorous characters, the critic singles out Richard Jones, Mrs. Pettibone and Ben Pump :

At Templeton we find Mr. Richard Jones, a kinsman of the proprietor ; one of those hangers-on whom we sometimes meet with in the country, who endeavour to conceal their dependent state by a kind of horse-play raillery on the foibles of their patron, and who make themselves useful by mixing toddy, keeping the day of the month, and entertaining that portion of rural visitors at a gentleman's house, which can be entertained by no one else. He is a conceited and loquacious gentleman ; and the character is well sustained, until he gets an office, when he ceases to be amusing. Next to him is Mrs. Remarkable Pettibone, in whom we recognize one of those frigid figures, without muscle or motion, apparently, who fill the important station of housekeeper to a widower, in the Eastern States. Her physiognomy may be traced by a single stroke from the vivid pencil of this author : « the skin of her nose was drawn tightly over the member, and then suffered to hang in large wrinkles in her cheeks and about her mouth. »

...Ben is a jolly fellow. He is a good portrait, with some novelty in the design. His voluntarily going into the stocks to keep Leather-stockings in countenance and break the weight of his disgrace, is an admirable thought and quite sailor-like. In occasional dashes like this, Mr. Cooper is eminently happy.

The portrait of Chingachgook is found both striking and accurate :

He forms a fine and striking portrait in the circle. He represents, with barbarous dignity, in his seventieth year, the last remnant of a powerful race, over whom his ancestors bore sway. The stubborn, but fallen power and pride ; — the lofty sentiments of personal dignity ; — the enduring, uncomplaining patience of ruin and despair ; — the feverish and convulsive recurrence to his former state ; — the deep sense of his wrongs, all softened, though not subdued by his conversion to Christianity, are depicted with a strong and accurate pencil.

Elizabeth Temple is very much admired as a heroine, while her companion, the clergyman's daughter, is found well-drawn but somewhat tame by the critic — who gives himself out as

OLIVER OLDSCHOOL, Esq., i. e. the old bachelor who was supposed to run the *Portfolio*, but who may again be Mrs. SARAH HALL, for aught we know (3) :

Perhaps if we had been one of the tenants of the wood, we should not have spoiled the barks of the Judge's trees, so highly prized, with the name of Louisa. She is, however, very amiable, and good, and « all that, *you know* ». Her weakness and timidity are well contrasted with the higher qualities of the Heiress of the Woods, and render her a very proper companion for her, although we cannot say that she would suit us in that capacity. This may arise however from a sort of indecision, on that delicate subject, which has become so habitual with us, that we claim little right to say a word about it, and shall consider it no disparagement of our critical acumen, if any indignant sister of Louisa, should stigmatize this as only the opinion of an *Old*.

Oliver Oldschool, you mean Madam !

But there is Elizabeth, a fine spirited girl, — with a clear sense of propriety, finely combined with a proper degree of feminine delicacy and pride. She possesses, moreover, great decision and firmness in doing her duty, and belongs, upon the whole, to a high order of heroines.

While on this topic, the reviewer — playfully but tactfully — gives some advice to the author, who should not have neglected to cater for the sentimental tastes of his fair readers :

None of the fierce and scornful looks which Oliver flashed upon her father, escaped her notice : — and in the heart of such a woman, they must have produced many painful struggles which might have been described with much effect. During the time that her lover resided under the same roof with her, a thousand little acts of tenderness must have escaped from the trammels of the most inflexible prudence. These we are left to imagine, and as *our* imagination is as dry on such topics as a remainder-biscuit, the veil must remain undrawn to our eyes. We shall just add, however, that the very causes, which imposed the restriction, were so many means in the hands of the author of enhancing the interest of the Tale. Pondering in our common and *inexperienced* minds upon the singular circumstances of the youth — his sullen pride in

(3) See the preceding chapter on the *Spy*, p. 78.

receiving the unsought favours of one by whom he fancied he had been so deeply wronged, and yet bound by the irresistible charms of his daughter, we should have led him often to « the dun umbrage of the falling stream ; » or borne him reckless of every thing, to the most frightful recesses of the mountains, to muse on his uncertain fate, and meditate on the means of gratifying at once his hate for the father and his love for the daughter. How many long and anxious talks, too, should we have framed for the wondering females, in their moonlight rambles by the margin of the sequestered Lake — about this young huntsman — so silent and handsome — the mystery of his connexion with the barbarous inhabitants of the cave — and, above all, the evident superiority of his mind to his fortunes ! Never, Mr. Cooper, never while you live, if you wish to sleep in a whole skin, throw aside such incalculable treasures. For want of a few pages of this description, which we all know you could have thrown off with as much ease as a fine woman scatters civil speeches among a crowd of admirers, you have inflicted a task upon the patience of many of your fair readers, who dare not remain in ignorance of « the new American novel » ; certain prodigiously wise critics have pronounced you dull, and the learned fraternity of dandies, have voted you incontinently *a sad bore* !

With regard to the episodes, the night fishing on the lake, the forest fire — with the death of Chingachgook — the panther scene, and the trial of Natty in the Court House, are all praised and quoted at length. Natty's trial, however, is the critic's favourite :

This article has already been extended to some length, but if we were to pass over the scene in the Court, we should shut our eyes to the most interesting and highly finished picture in the collection... The description of the Court House ; — the organization of the court ; — the sober deportment of the prisoner, — are all recognized as true to life. But the trial of Bumpo can hardly be surpassed in strength of delineation and vividness of colouring. His simplicity, his subdued spirit, mingled with his habits of independence and unconsciousness of wrong, and his speeches to the court, irresistibly rivet the attention. That part of his address to Judge Temple, in which he reminds him of the rescue of his daughter from a cruel death ; — that direct appeal to his paternal feelings, when he asks how the beast of the forest minded his

laws when it thirsted for the blood of his child, &c. is a burst of natural eloquence that overpowers the heart. There is nothing in it but what such a man in such a situation might say, and yet nothing better could be said by any man.

The style is implicitly praised in the conclusion, which, though favourable, reiterates the reservations expressed at the beginning of the review :

In comparison with « *the Spy* », we think it will be found that « *the Pioneers* » is a more finished composition and of a higher order ; it may not, however, be as popular, because, as we have already remarked, the subject is less captivating, and it wants the interesting plot which enriches its predecessor.

Niles' Weekly Register for March 22 makes no reservations of this kind, and its short appreciation of the new work is as patriotically enthusiastic as in the case of the *Spy* :

THE PIONEERS. « Who reads an American book ? » was the late modest and liberal demand of the editors of the *Edinburgh Review*. The « *Pioneers* », we venture to say, will be read by tens of thousands even in Great Britain. It does not appear to be second to the best production of the « great wizard of the north, » as the author of the « *Waverly novels* » is called. The character and grouping is excellent, and will furnish many delightful scenes for the painter ; and the great merit is, that there is *probability* in the highest wrought parts of the book — the chief things, indeed, seem as if familiar to us, and we have only to admire the satisfactory manner in which they are presented. We shall not particularize — for the book will be read, whether the reviewers like it or not.

The article of the *United States Gazette* (4), which we have already quoted as consecrating Cooper's fame after the publication of the *Pioneers*, does not contain any criticism of the work itself. It should be recalled, however, that it shows the great influence of the *Pioneers* on American artists and its success among critics and men of letters.

(4) *Vide supra*, Part. I., p. 19.

This success is also proved beyond question by the glowing tributes of Richard H. Dana and Paulding. Though not acquainted with Cooper, DANA wrote to him on April 2, 1823 to congratulate him on the success of the *Spy* and the *Pioneers*, particularly the latter (5) :

What a full and true description you have given of a newly settled village in a new country. Such a motley company huddled together, yet all distinctly marked and individual, and every one as busy as can be, as always is the case in such a place. (Honest Major Hartmann in his sky blue coat is but a visitor and remarker, and of course, not as busy as the rest, always excepting his share in Mistress Hollister's good cheer.) There is your bustling, vain Jack-at-all-trades, Richard, Ben, Aggy, and Brown at the shooting match. Miss « Remarkable, » a most happy instance of one of the thousands of those beings to be found anywhere amongst us, who let themselves out to make themselves and the family as uncomfortable as possible — and there is Miss — « I will call her Betsey, » full of spirit and beauty, and the dying Indian. The stout, honest-hearted « Billy Kirby » — how well he became that picturesque scene at the sugar bush.

I was heartily glad too at meeting again with Mistress Flanagan, of whom Miss Edgeworth gives so good a character. No one could have mistaken her when she came up to the sleigh, as Mrs. Hollister, or in that admirable scene with her husband in their public room after church on Christmas eve...

I have run unawares into particulars ; yet I cannot close without a parting word to « Leatherstocking ». Could we hear such preachers as Natty when in the boat on the Lake, would not the world be better than it is ? Grand and elevated as he is, making him so is no departure from truth. He read in a book filled with inspiration, look on it where we will. But, alas, too few feel the inspiration there — or scarcely in that other Book which God has given us. Natty's uneducated mind, shown us in his pronunciation and use of words belonging to low life, mingled with his inborn eloquence — his solitary life — his old age, his simplicity, and delicate feelings, create a grateful and very peculiar

emotion made up of admiration and pity and concern. So highly is his character wrought that I was fearful lest he would not hold out to the end. But he *does* grow upon us to the very close of the last scene, which is, perhaps, the finest, certainly the most touching in the book. A friend of mine said at Natty's departure, « I longed to go with him. » (6)

PAULDING expresses his opinion in one of the introductory chapters, *à la Fielding*, which are prefixed to the several books of his *Köningsmarke, the Long Finne* (1823) (7). Being one day in a book shop, he was shocked by the « criticisms of a couple of smart young gentlemen on the new novel called the *Pioneers*. This they agreed in pronouncing absolutely *vulgar*, a phrase than which none other ever spoken or written, is so absolutely fatal to a book in the *beau monde* ». Such an unexpected condemnation of Cooper's work set Paulding thinking :

Returning to our solitary lodging, we fell upon attempting to account for this perhaps fashionable opinion of a work we had read with a pleasure and interest we felt almost ashamed to avow in the presence of such well-dressed judges, and which, till that moment, we had considered as one of the most agreeable, as well as natural pictures, of a state of society peculiar to our country, that we had ever seen...

Our early life, too, had been passed in the midst of rural scenes and rural society, and we could bear testimony, on the authority of our own experience, to the truth and nature of the author's delineations, not only of character and manners, but of seasons and scenery. Nay, we had actually known a Richard Jones, a village doctor, an emigrant Frenchman, and a Squire Doolittle, so like those introduced in the *Pioneers*, that we could almost swear they were the same. The gradual opening of the forest, the introduction of religious worship ; the establishment of courts of justice ; the new-year sports and festivals ; and the progress of a new settlement in all its features, from a state of nature to a state

(6) Cf. *Correspondence of J. F. C.* pp. 92-94.

(7) Cf. Book VI, chap. I.

of society, was so familiar to our recollection, that the reading of this charming work seemed actually to present before us the picture hitherto only preserved in the memory of the past.

Such being the case, we did not like to hear those characters with whom we had been accustomed to associate, and those little incidents and amusements which we had mingled in and shared with such relish, in the days of boyhood, treated as low and vulgar. »

Paulding concludes that those young men, like many novel-readers, had a wrong conception of vulgarity, and he does not hesitate to accuse the Great Unknown of having fallen into this defect when painting court-life, while Cooper has avoided it in his picture of an American settlement :

With certain people, perhaps a large portion of those who read novels, every thing which is not fashionable is vulgar...the essence of vulgarity consists, more or less, in its approaches to what is actually vicious and indecent. It is, in fact, much more nearly allied to morals than to manners... Thus, when we read of a King of Prussia getting intoxicated, and beating his wife and daughter, whatever be the rank of the parties, the scene is as intrinsically vulgar, as if it were laid in the kitchen of a palace, or the bar of a country tavern. So, also, when in a late popular work of the « Great Unknown, » we are introduced to the court of a king, and presented with pictures of morals the most debauched and corrupt ; with titled pimps, and prostitute duchesses ; with a parent seeking to compass the purposes of revenge, by placing his only daughter in the power of a systematic seducer and voluptuary — not the rank of the actors, the splendours of a court, nor the false glitter thrown around the whole by the genius of the writer, can rescue the picture from the imputation of vulgar indecency.

There is nothing of all this in the novel of the Pioneers ; neither exhibitions of high-born or vulgar vice... The whole is pure, and unsoiled by any thing of the kind ; and, for ourselves, we are not afraid to invite a comparison, with regard to this essential point of vulgarity, between the fireside of the worthy Judge Temple, and the beer-drinking, bear-baiting festivity of Kenilworth, or the gross corruptions of the court of Charles the Second, on both of which the most polished of our readers banquet with such a refined *gusto*.

It is only fair to add that Percival, the sentimental New England poet, thought exactly like Paulding's « smart young men », since he wrote in April 1823 : « I ask nothing of a people who will lavish their patronage on such a vulgar book as « the Pioneers ». They and I are well quit. They neglect me, and I despise them. » (8) Yet the very tone of this passage sufficiently shows that spite was at the bottom of Percival's criticisms.

The *North American* (9) waited more than three years before giving its opinion of the Pioneers, in an article chiefly devoted to a review of the *Mohicans*. Nevertheless the Pioneers is preferred to its more popular successor and the character of the *old hunter* is declared more poetical than that of the younger *scout* :

The numerous characters introduced to play their respective parts in the rise and progress of Templeton, and whom we have no opportunity to notice, are drawn with great spirit and originality, and are precisely such a collection as we uniformly meet when we visit a young thriving village in the interior of our country. But the Leatherstocking is a natural, and yet highly poetical being, not only far above the ordinary run of fictitious personages, but even superior to the scout, whom we nevertheless esteem highly. It is the same Nathaniel Bumppo ; but his native peculiarities are bolder in the full development of a green old age, and rendered more striking by a judicious contrast. His description of the Catskill is much in the style of the scout's description of Glen's, which we have quoted above ; but we think it better, and regret that our limits will not permit us to extract it ; and but for the same cause we could make extracts to great advantage from any of the several scenes in which this son of the wilderness is brought into collision with civilization, and made the subject of laws and customs entirely adverse to those of the woods.

Chingachgook, as he appears in the Pioneers, is very much such a humbled, long haired, half civilized, and drunken Indian as we have often seen, with some little remnant of his ancient glories about him. His death scene, in which, not-

(8) Cf. *Lounsbury*, p. 61.

(9) July 1826, p. 195. (W. H. Gardiner).

withstanding his supposed conversion to Christianity, he is plainly relapsing into the faith of his fathers, looking forward to the happy hunting grounds where he shall rejoin the spirits of his tribe, is very well done ; as are several other passages designed to exhibit the apparent incapacity of the red man to conceive the religion of the whites.

The *Last of the Mohicans*, we believe has generally been the more popular of these two books. But for ourselves, we still hold to the *Pioneers*, and trust our author will in future always write to please himself, although we are not sure we might not have as long a catalogue of errata to correct in this production, as in that which we have so copiously noticed, if time and space dit not fail us.

In the *New York Mirror* for August 4, 1827, a general article on « Cooper's novels » contains a parallel between the *Spy* and the *Pioneers* in which the palm is awarded to the latter, owing chiefly to the character of *Leatherstocking* (10) :

The *Pioneers* soon followed. We always entertained a different opinion from the million as to the respective merits of this work and the preceding. Considered merely as a narrative, the last is certainly inferior. The interest is not sustained by the same quick succession of striking incident and situation — the perils and vicissitudes of warlike enterprize ; and, to the superficial reader, these are every thing. It has other merits, however, of a rarer and greater kind. We could name an abundance of novels which, like the *Spy*, contain a highly-wrought and interesting narrative, and a number of pleasing and well-drawn characters ; but there are few that present such vivid pictures of a remarkable body of people, with all their peculiarities of manners and feeling, as the *Pioneers* does of our western population ; and it is still more seldom that in any work, either of prose or poetry, drama or narrative, we meet with a creation of fancy to compare with *Leatherstocking*. The time will no doubt arrive, distant as it may now appear, when the whole of our country will become thickly populated, and the present race of backwoodsmen become wholly extinct. This work will then be considered invaluable, as a true memorial of what will then

be considered the infancy of the country and the olden time. It is not sufficient praise to say the character of Leather-stocking is natural and original. We often meet with delineations which we pronounce to be natural, because we observe nothing in them decidedly the reverse — and original, because we do not remember to have seen any thing drawn precisely like them before ; but this personage is not only totally different from every thing we ever before looked upon, but he is sketched with such undefinable skill — possesses so much peculiar individuality, that we at once *know* him to be true to nature, even though we have never seen his counterpart in real life, and can scarce persuade ourselves that he does not possess an actual existence. It is this stamp of reality which is borne by most of the creations of Shakspeare and Scott, and the power of imparting it is perhaps the loftiest attribute of genius.

Another general article in the *American Quarterly Review* for June 1835 is very laudatory (11) :

We have always looked upon the *Pioneers* as one of the ablest, though certainly not most interesting of these works. The descriptions of forest life, the turkey shooting, the bass fishing, the pigeon « hunting, » the panther fight, the fire — are all as vivid and stirring as the canvass. Mr. Cooper had manifestly caught the real inspiration of the land... He threw himself into the wilds, where the national character was developed by the obstacles it had to surmount ; and seized, with the eye of a poet and of a philosopher of the American school, the leading traits of his countrymen. Remarkable Pettibone is a good specimen of those qualities which make our people such bad servants and such capital citizens ; while the sketch of Ben Pump, though it gave small token of the new chord he was about to strike, still told us that he had not forgotten his early element. Among these personages, nearly forty years later than the date of the *Mohicans*, moves the real hero — Leather Stocking... and the closing scene, in which he takes his leave of Effingham and Elizabeth, to wander into the trackless west, is among the most touching things in these books (12).

(11) Cf. pp. 413-14.

(12) It is interesting to note that, in September 1860, the *National Quarterly Review* (p. 283) recalled a previous review of the *American*, entirely different in tone — a review in which the *Pioneers* was said to be « a story entirely destitute of interest... unwieldy, slovenly, ungrammatical and insufferable! »

In 1838, the *North American* (13) is even more partial to the *Pioneers* than in 1826 :

Of all the *land* novels... « *The Pioneers* » is our favorite. The author is on his strong ground, depicting persons and scenes, that he had watched and known from infancy. None but a genuine backwoodsman, born and brought up, as the Yankees say, on the frontiers, could have sketched so happily the humors, occupations, and sports of an infant settlement.

The critic however finds fault with the lack of finish in the description of natural scenery, which is the cause of a certain « haziness » :

... there is something wanting even in these brilliant sketches. They are evidently thrown off in a hurry, drawn with little care from the exuberant stores of a retentive memory, and committed to paper with little effort to make the effect on the reader correspond to the vivid impression existing in the writer's mind. There is no attempt at that finish of literary execution, which gives grace and perfection to the descriptive passages scattered through the novels of Scott. Mr. Cooper feels and remembers the beauty of a remarkable view, but he will not stop to describe it with that occasional minuteness, which is necessary to create a belief in the reality of the scene. He gives the general character of the landscape, but does not attempt to analyze it, and a haziness consequently rests upon the conception which the reader attempts to form.

As to the characters, they are « hardly so individual, or so well drawn, as the scenes and incidents ». Besides, Cooper's Yankees are not absolutely true to type :

... Billy Kirby, the woodchopper from « *Varmount*, » with his huge frame, indolent good-nature, boastful speech, and readiness to turn his hand to any employment, is a successful sketch. And the bustling, pragmatismal « *Squire Jones* », with his inordinate self-conceit, and officious habits, the *factotum* of the village, shrewd in some things, but a most practicable

dupe in others, will be easily recognised by any denizen of a New England town. Still, the real Yankee remains to be sketched by some limner of a more delicate touch, and nicer tact, than Mr. Cooper. There are fine traits about him, which do not meet the eye of every careless observer but are essential to the fidelity of a portrait. The Yankee is a true poet, in his way ; his faculty at guessing, his scheming propensity, and his universality of talent, (*many-sidedness* the Germans would call it), all bearing witness to his power of imagination. Common painters do him no justice in this respect. Even Mr. Irving, admirably as he has hit off the Dutch of New York, has failed on New England ground. Jack Downing is more graphic, for he is a Yankee himself. But Jack also has too much of the Cruickshank talent, his happiest efforts are only ludicrous exaggerations. All praise to Miss Sedgwick for « Aunt Debby, » the only veritable female Yankee on record. Her sketch is a perfect gem ; Hogarth, or Sir Joshua Reynolds, has nothing finer or more characteristic.

In 1847 GRISWOLD follows Cooper's autobiographical notes very closely but he makes use of a rather unfortunate phrase of his own when he calls the *Pioneers* « the poorest of the Leather Stocking tales » :

In 1823 appeared *The Pioneers*. This book, it seems to me, has always had a reputation partly factitious. It is the poorest of the *Leather Stocking tales*, nor was its success either marked or spontaneous. Still it was very well received, though it was thought to be a proof that the author was written out. With this book commenced the absurdity of saying Mr. Cooper introduced family traits and family history into his novels (14).

This passage is probably the one which BRYANT had in mind when, in his *Memorial Discourse* (15), he endeavoured to prove that the reputation of the *Pioneers* was not in the least factitious — unaware of the fact that he was thus contradicting Cooper's own statement :

In a recent survey of Mr. Cooper's works, by one of his

(14) Cf. *The Prose Writers of America*, p. 264.

(15) Cf. pp. 47-48.

admirers, it is intimated that the reputation of this work may have been in some degree factitious. I cannot think so ; I cannot see how such a work could fail of becoming, sooner or later, a favourite. It was several years after its first appearance that I read the *Pioneers*, and I read it with a delighted astonishment. Here, said I to myself, is the poet of rural life in this country — our Hesiod, our Theocritus, except that he writes without the restraint of numbers, and is a greater poet than they. In the *Pioneers*, as in a moving picture, are made to pass before us the hardy occupations and spirited amusements of a prosperous settlement, in a fertile region, encompassed for leagues around with the primeval wilderness of woods... these, and other scenes of rural life, drawn, as Cooper knew how to draw them, in the bright and healthful colouring of which he was master, are interwoven with a regular narrative of human fortunes, not unskilfully constructed ; and how could such a work be otherwise than popular ?

After this, Bryant does not attempt to analyse the *Pioneers* in detail, but he singles out the character of Leatherstocking and pays him one of the warmest tributes on record :

In the *Pioneers*, Leatherstocking, is first introduced — a philosopher of the woods, ignorant of books, but instructed in all that nature, without the aid of science, could reveal to the man of quick senses and inquiring intellect, whose life has been passed under the open sky, and in companionship with a race whose animal perceptions are the acutest and most cultivated of which there is any example. But Leatherstocking has higher qualities ; in him there is a genial blending of the gentlest virtues of the civilized man with the better nature of the aboriginal tribes ; all that in them is noble, generous, and ideal, is adopted into his own kindly character, and all that is evil is rejected. But why should I attempt to analyze a character so familiar ? Leatherstocking is acknowledged, on all hands, to be one of the noblest, as well as most striking and original creations of fiction. In some of his subsequent novels, Cooper — for he had not yet attained to the full maturity of his powers — heightened and ennobled his first conception of the character, but in the *Pioneers* it dazzled the world with the splendour of novelty.

It should be added that, among the letters read in the Metropolitan Hall as a sort of introduction to Bryant's Discourse, there was one in which EMERSON recalled his « happy days on the first appearance of the *Pioneers* » and « the unanimity with which that national novel was greeted » (16).

At about the same time, in the *North American* (17), PARKMAN claims for the *Pioneers* a very high place, perhaps the highest place, among Cooper's works :

The *Pioneers*, the fourth volume of the series, is, in several respects, the best of Cooper's works. Unlike some of its companions, it bears every mark of having been written from the results of personal experience ; and indeed, Cooper is well known to have drawn largely on the recollections of his earlier years in the composition of this novel. The characters are full of vitality and truth, though, in one or two instances, the excellence of delineation is impaired by a certain taint of vulgarity... The scenes of the Christmas turkey-shooting, the fish-spearing by firelight on Otsego lake, the rescue from the panther, and the burning of the woods, are all inimitable in their way. Of all Cooper's works, *The Pioneers* seems to us most likely to hold a permanent place in literature, for it preserves a vivid reflection of scenes and characters which will soon have passed away.

Ten years later the *Atlantic Monthly* (18) is not far from entertaining the same opinion in a passage which does full justice to the poetical merits of the work :

Indeed, this whole novel (*The Pioneers*) is full of the finest expression of the author's genius. Into none of his works has he put more of the warmth of personal feeling and the glow of early recollection. His own heart beats through every line. The fresh breezes of the morning of life play round its pages, and its unexhaled dew hangs upon them. It is colored throughout with the rich hues of sympathetic emotion. All

(16) Cf. *Memorial of J. F. C.*, New York, Putnam, 1852, p. 33.

(17) January 1852, p. 157.

(18) January 1862, pp. 63-64.

that is attractive in pioneer life is reproduced with substantial truth ; but the pictures are touched with those finer lights which time pours over the memories of childhood. With what spirit and power all the characteristic incidents and scenes of a new settlement are described, — pigeon-shooting, bass-fishing, deer-hunting, the making of maple-sugar, the turkey-shooting at Christmas, the sleighing-parties in winter ! How distinctly his landscapes are painted, — the deep, impenetrable forest, the gleaming lake, the crude aspect and absurd architecture of the new - born village ! How full of poetry in the ore is the conversation of Leatherstocking ! The incongruities and peculiarities of social life which are the result of a sudden rush of population into the wilderness are also well sketched ; though with a pencil less free and vivid than that with which he paints the aspects of Nature and the movements of natural man. As respects the structure of the story, and the probability of the incidents, the novel is open to criticism ; but such is the fascination that hangs over it, that it is impossible to criticise. To do this would be as ungracious as to correct the language and pronunciation of an old friend who revives by his conversation the fading memories of school-boy and college life.

In 1883, on the contrary, LOUNSBURY rather sides with Griswold in his sketchy comments on the *Pioneers* :

It was a vivid and faithful picture of the sights he had seen and the men he had met in the home of his childhood... In it appear in comparatively rude outlines the personages whose name and exploits his pen was afterwards to make famous throughout the civilized world. They are in this work of a far less lofty type than in those which followed. « *The Pioneers*, » in truth, though not a poor story, is much the poorest of the series of which it forms a part. The almost loving interest he took in the matter about which he was writing tempted the author to indulge his recollections at the expense of his judgment... The story as a story suffered in consequence from the very fascination which the subject had for his mind. So subordinate was it made, especially in the first half, to the description of the scenes, that the details at times become wearisome and the interest often flags (19).

In 1906 L.-H. VINCENT, while recognizing that the strength of the book does not lie in the plot, is not only much more favourable than Lounsbury, but insists on the originality of the *Pioneers* as compared with the following tales of the series :

Readers have deplored the fact that nothing was so like a Leather-Stocking tale as another Leather-Stocking tale. But *The Pioneers*, the first of the series in order of composition, bears little resemblance to the others, and as a picture of life in a New York village at the end of the Eighteenth Century has a historical value. The narrative is firm in texture. The characters are thirty in number, and every man in his humor... The dialogue is fresh, racy, and appropriate. There is no effort at compression; winter evenings were long in 1824.

The book holds one by the scenes and characters rather than by the « fable ». The mystery of « Edwards », and the coming to life of old Major Effingham, are well enough ; but the strength of the story is in the episodes...

The Pioneers would merit a high place in American fiction were it only on account of that original character, Natty Bumppo, or « Leather-Stocking ». He is natural, easy, attractive. In the other books (always excepting *The Prairie*), there is more of invention. Putting it another way, the first Natty Bumppo is like a study from life, while the others often leave the impression of being studies from the first study (20).

In 1910 JOHN ERSKINE, overlooking the poetical aspect of the *Pioneers* so felicitously commented upon in the *Atlantic Monthly*, considers the work as a striking instance of Cooper's « thorough realism ».

Cooper's realism is severely tested by this theme ; the author who wished to set his country honorably before foreign readers, who wished to immortalize the home he loved best, might have found pardon for some rose-tinted exaggeration. But the story presents the unsoftened outlines of the new settlement, its pretensions to architecture and ceremony, the ignorance and recklessness of its inhabitants, the democratic confusion of its society. Cooper's Americanism, loyal as it was, never blinded

(20) Cf. *American Literary Masters*, pp. 77-78.

him to the faults unavoidable in so new a country, and no later writer has portrayed with more merciless severity the meddling, officious sheriff, the quack physician who learns his profession by observing the results of his practice, the disreputable lawyer, and the incompetent builder. No single figure in the story escapes altogether the suspicion and pity inherent in such thorough realism ; even Leatherstocking is here somewhat vulgar and narrow-brained, with none of the philosophy and dignity he exhibits in *The Deerslayer* or *The Prairie*. All the adventurous spirits that hold this outpost of civilization have some blight upon them, so that the reader half questions whether Cooper considers them social explorers or derelicts. Even the amusing Betty Flanagan, who lives on from *The Spy* as the wife of Sergeant Hollister, and who keeps the Bold Dragoon Inn, named in memory of Captain Lawton, is more canny and less impulsive than in her Revolutionary days.

John Erskine even goes so far as to claim that there is little or no poetry in the characters of Leatherstocking and Indian John, as depicted in the *Pioneers* :

Because Leatherstocking and Indian John in his first novel were connected with this saddened romance of nature, they were transfigured in the popular imagination with all the poetry that Cooper, learning by the popular hint, later bestowed upon them (21).

The same opinions, to a great extent at least, are expressed by CARL VAN DOREN in 1921 :

... now for the first time Cooper had set himself to the realistic representation of American manners. Dealing as he did with the Otsego settlement where his boyhood had been spent, and with a time (1793) partly within his memory, he could write largely with his eye upon the fact. Whatever romance there is in the story lies less in its plot, which is a conventional story of a worthy line for the moment dispossessed but eventually to be restored again ; or in its characters, which are, for the most part, studied under a dry light with a good deal of caustic

(21) Cf. *Leading American Novelists*, pp. 67-68.

judgment — less in these things than in the essential wonder of a pioneer life...

In *The Pioneers* he (Natty) is not of the proportions which he later assumed, and only at the end, when he withdraws from the field of his defeat by civilization, does he make his full appeal; but he is of the tribe of heroes to which Harvey Birch had belonged, lowly men of lofty virtues (22).

Two years later WILLIAM LYON PHELPS agrees even more with John Erskine with regard to the character of Leatherstocking :

In reversing time's flight with Leatherstocking, Cooper developed his own powers of creation in due proportion to the strength and activity of the hero. He had only faintly shadowed forth the man in *Pioneers*. In contrast to the strong, resourceful, alert and adroit Hawkeye, it is a shock to meet the later Nat Bumppo ; it is like meeting a friend after the lapse of years and finding his youth and strength gone and his fine spirit dulled. In *Pioneers* we have the picture of a rather ignorant and often plaintive man, who regrets the march of civilization. The ideal side is missing (23).

Ignoring this question altogether, F. L. PATTEE's article in the *American Mercury* for March 1925 primarily deals with the structure of the story, in a short but arresting paragraph :

The Pioneers is not really a novel ; it is an American *Bracebridge Hall*. Half of it is concerned with the Christmas festivities at Templeton Hall. Up as far even as Chapter XXVII it is mostly reminiscent sketching. Then suddenly, at the words, « It was cut with a knife », it burst thrillingly into life. The last seventy pages mark the appearance of a new force in the fiction of the world. Hiram Doolittle, by that single stroke of his knife, has set free Natty Bumppo. The mere village « character » becomes at once an epic figure. The reader is hurried on to a climax unsurpassed in fiction. James Fenimore Cooper had arrived (24).

(22) Cf. *The American Novel*, pp. 30-31.

(23) Cf. *Ladies' Home Journal*, January 1926, p. 117.

(24) Cf. 293-94.

Finally, in 1927, LUCY LOCKWOOD HAZARD (25) devotes a few glowing pages to the vindication of the *heroic* character of Leatherstocking in the *Pioneers* — a striking retort to the disparaging comments of too many modern American critics, whether of high or low degree :

...*The Pioneers*, represents Natty Bumppo and his faithful companion the Mohican, as old men, already out of place and ill at ease as the settlements crowded around them. One of the writers of high school texts comments on this fact with the following ingenuous observation :

When Cooper published *The Pioneers* he probably had no intention of writing a series of novels recounting the adventures of Natty Bumppo, or Leatherstocking, and his Indian friend Chingachgook ; otherwise he would hardly have painted so shabby a picture of these two old heroes, neglected and despised in a land through which they had once moved as masters.

It is hard to conceive of a sentence which could reveal a more glaring lack of critical insight coupled with a blandly Rotarian worship of success. The hero must be successful, Bumppo in *The Pioneers* is not successful ; *ergo*, Cooper could not have intended him as a hero. The syllogism is perfect — if we accept the major premise. But as far back as Cooper we find the questioning of the idol of success. Can anyone read *The Pioneers* and not feel that Leatherstocking is a more heroic character than Judge Temple ? though Judge Temple is the « successful » man... ? Let those who sneer at Cooper read again the scene in which Judge Temple sentences the old hunter for the killing of a deer..

One may search American literature for a scene of more gripping dramatic power than this written by Fenimore Cooper whom little critical gentlemen patronize because of his « wooden dialogue » and stilted, slovenly style, and inefficiently unsuccessful hero ; Fenimore Cooper, who had the genius, not only to create a living character as the incarnate spirit of the chronic pioneers, but to trace in the life of that character the theme of the receding frontier. »

(25) Cf. *The Frontier in American Literature*, New York, Crowell, pp. 113-16.

England

John Murray, the king of English publishers, had flatly declined to reprint the *Spy*, just as he had refused to reprint Irving's *Sketch Book*. By a striking coincidence, the unforeseen success of the *Spy* induced him to publish an English edition of the *Pioneers*, just as the unexpected fame of the *Sketch Book* had led him to undertake the publication of *Bracebridge Hall*.

Murray's edition of the *Pioneers* followed very close on the heels of the American edition, since, exactly one month after the record sale registered on the morning of February 1, 1823, the *Literary Gazette* (1) contained this advertisement :

In 3 vols 12 mo. 18 s. THE PIONEERS ; or, The Sources of the Susquehanna. By the Author of the « *Spy* ». Printed for John Murray, Albemarle-street.

The *Monthly Literary Register* for March (2) reviews the new work in a rather unfriendly spirit, for it considers that it has become necessary to re-act against the fashion which has set in of extolling American writings, since the publication of the *Sketch Book* :

Previously to the arrival of Geoffrey Crayon, we had been accustomed to regard the productions of our Trans-Atlantic brethren with a supercilious eye ; but, from the moment that the writings of Mr. Irvine (sic) became popular, it has been the fashion to admire and extol American literature. This is all

(1) March 1, 1823, p. 144.

(2) Cf. pp. 218-20.

very well in its way... All that we complain of, is, the prevalent disposition, which some would dignify by the epithet of *liberal* to exalt foreign at the expence (sic) of native talent... there is bad taste in this, as well as bad spirit.

The preface is criticized as « very affected », and the title as irrelevant, since « for any connexion subsisting between the title and the book, [it] might, with as much propriety, be called *The Waggon Train*, or *The Light Infantry* ». As to the plot, it is :

...extremely slight in its texture ; and, for a work of fiction, it possesses one of the worst of faults — that of its *denouement* being perceptible, even to the capacity of a child, almost from its first page.

In addition Cooper is denied the merit of true originality :

These volumes are a palpable, though not a servile imitation of the works of the Scotch novelist... The fire scene... has evidently been suggested by the appalling water scene in the « *Antiquary* ; » and, as in the latter the heroine is preserved through the agency of Edie Ochiltree, so in the former she is rescued by that of Natty Bumppo. The copy is spirited and interesting ; but, compared with its original, it is lamentably deficient in depth and power.

The critic, however, is pleased to consider as « bold sketches » the bass fishing, the panther scene and the death of Indian John. A few other complimentary remarks are occasionally met with but they are generally qualified by important reservations :

The narrative is spirited, but not powerful ; the descriptions are vivid, but frequently indistinct ; the characters, without being striking or impressive, partake too much of the nature of caricature. It is probable, however, that, as a whole, the tale may exhibit a fair view of the manners and habits of a rising settlement in America thirty years ago.

Mr. Cooper's comic characters are not without humour ; but their humour too frequently oversteps « the modesty of nature ».

With Natty Bumppo, he has evidently taken most pains, and Natty is a male compound of Meg Merrilies, and the numerous family of that venerable personage with which « the GREAT UNKNOWN » has obligingly made us acquainted.

One month later, the *British Magazine, or Miscellany of Polite Literature* (3) is much more favourable. After stating that, Washington Irving excepted, Cooper is « the most original and the best author that the United States of America have produced », it points out the superiority of a work like the *Pioneers* over the ordinary books of travel :

The descriptions of travellers, whether natives or foreigners, are so tame and languid, that if one does not doubt their accuracy (which for ourselves we always do) one reads them without interest. They are necessarily cursory, and often fall into very inadequate hands ; but in Mr. Cooper's descriptions we are at once presented with characters and habits so probable, and so like to the modes into which such society as that of America would most probably fall, that their authenticity is believed at once, and their singular originality is in the highest degree amusing.

But, if the reviewer is particularly struck with the originality of the characters, he is apparently unable to look upon them with unprejudiced eyes. Indeed his general account of the population of an American settlement, as described in the *Pioneers*, might induce one to believe that Cooper's work is a bitter satire of the *Home as Found* type rather than an « American *Bracebridge Hall* » :

The scenery of the remote settlements is too extensive and too monotonous to give much room for pleasing description, but the inhabitants of those districts are full of variety ; each man seems to be *sui generis*, and the wildness of their lives, the scattered and unsettled state of society ; combine to give a half-savage air to the people. Their characters are composed of features sufficiently disagreeable upon the whole : their rudeness, their insensibility, their cruelty, and their arrogance, remove

(3) Cf. pp. 65-81 (April 1823).

them little from the original inhabitants of the soil, while they are infinitely below them in the scale of moral virtue ; but their indomitable courage, their lofty devotion to liberty, and their attachment to their native country, raise their national character to an elevated distinction, and present an abrupt and irreconcilable contrast to its more disgusting points.

In the summary of the work which follows, the critic praises Natty Bumppo, Billy Kirby and Ben Pump for their originality. Among the episodes, the bass fishing and the pigeon shooting are said to be « amusing », while the panther scene, the forest fire, and the death of Mohegan are considered very powerful and effective.

The conclusion, which ranks Cooper immediately after the Great Unknown, contains a fair appreciation of the respective merits of the *Spy* and the *Pioneers* :

We think the *Pioneers*, in point of construction and incident, is inferior to *The Spy* ; but in the local descriptions, the painting of character, and in vigour of style, it is far superior to it.

The *Kaleidoscope or Literary and Scientific Mirror*, a Liverpool weekly which had coolly reprinted nearly all the tales of the *Sketch Book* (4), publishes the panther scene on April 1, 1823, with an introductory note in which the editor declares : « We have seldom experienced more intense interest than that which we felt in the perusal of this forest sketch. »

In May, the *Album* (5) reviews the *Pioneers* with great fairness and much critical insight. Having devoted the first part of its article to the *Spy*, it naturally compares the two productions :

The work before us is still more wonderfully graphic and real in its descriptions both of scenery and persons ; the characters are equally vividly marked and distinctly sustained, and the dialogue (a merit, and a great one, which we have omitted to notice above) is quite as spirited and natural as in the former produc-

(4) See CAIRNS, pp. 59-62.

(5) Cf., pp. 155-78 (May 1823).

tion. But it has one great fault, which will, we think, with novel-readers, render it less popular than its predecessor, and which is, in truth, a great lessening of the interest which might be given to the work, — we mean the almost total want of story... The whole of the second volume, for instance, is occupied with descriptions of the pursuits of the settlers, which would be as fitted to a tour as to a book purporting to be a novel ; and consequently, excellent as they are, each and all, they *do* occasionally flag a little in rapidity and interest. This is the more to be regretted, as the author has shewn in his former work, in how able and dramatic a manner he can conduct his narrative, without, in any degree, sacrificing the objects he has more immediately in view — manners and character ; on the contrary, they gain, rather than lose, by the admixture.

A long extract from the first chapter is then given as an instance of fine description, and commented upon in the following manner :

This is a formidable extract, — but we think it will justify the praise we have given to the graphic powers of this author — perhaps especially with regard to personal appearance. The description of the old hunter is given with almost visual effect. But the author is a little too conscious of this power ; — we mean he is *so* conscious of it, that he uses it with a frequency which, at last, becomes almost fatiguing ; — and indulges in it with equal minuteness with respect to persons who appear but that once throughout the book.

Of the characters, Richard Jones is the first to be warmly praised, although the reviewer does not fail to detect his likeness to the *Spectator's* Will Wimble.

Here, again, is a character, the farthest in the world from originality in itself, yet with none of the repetitions or insipidity of a copy. Mr. Jones, is in fact, a mere Will Wimble ; of which, since the original, we have had a score of versions ; — but he is so lively and so good-humoured — so deliciously self-conceited, and so bustlingly officious, yet (especially in a new settlement), often so really serviceable withal, — that we quite forget his want of novelty, and are delighted to meet him wherever he appears.

The minor characters are generally approved of :

There is an admirable description of the person, studies, and progress, of the village doctor, only that it is too long, with reference to his slight appearance in the book. There is a short revivification of Serjeant Hollister, and his spouse, the *ci-devant* Betty Flanagan, as publicans, with poor Lawton for their sign ; and, beside these, we have a number of sketches, which we are surprised could be crowded into three smallish volumes, occupied, as so large a portion of them is, by descriptions of pursuits, rather than of persons. Of these, Billy Kirby, a stalwart wood-chopper, is we think, the best, and M. Le Quoi, a French refugee, decidedly the worst.

But, obviously, the critic is most impressed by Natty Bumppo and his Indian companion :

This character [Mohegan] is managed with the happiest skill throughout. He is introduced sufficiently often to keep up the interest concerning him, and not so frequently as to render the wild and romantic sketch too familiar. The resemblance and distinction between him and the Leatherstocking are admirably touched and shaded. The one has retrograded towards savage life, and the other has slightly advanced towards civilization, till the difference between their character and habits becomes exceedingly slight — but that difference, arising and remaining from the Indian feelings, which the warrior has never lost, and the hunter never acquired, is marked and preserved with truly a master's hand.

Among the episodes, the panther scene and Mohegan's death are quoted at length, the latter being called « the finest thing in the book ». But the forest fire is criticized in some particulars :

There is, subsequently, another escape from the conflagration of an American forest — an event, we believe, not very uncommon ; — but this, though probably more wrought than any thing in the book, is by no means the happiest, to our taste. This is, chiefly, because it is, by far, the most direct imitation of the Scotch novels. — In other places, the resemblance is only

in the general tone ; but here, an event is closely copied. The passage to which we refer, is the celebrated sea-scene in the *Antiquary* — and, though the element, in this case, is fire, yet the whole plan and progress of the scene is accurately similar, Elizabeth is Miss Wardour — Edwards, Lovel — and the Leather-Stocking, Edie Ochiltree. In itself, also, we do not like it so well as other parts of the book. The young man is supposed to retain all his energy and presence of mind, — and we, therefore, cannot see why the passage of escape, through which Bumpo leads them, should have been invisible to him.

The conclusion is a friendly warning to Cooper against « undue and hurrying haste », a fault in which the reviewer — wrongly it seems — sees the chief cause of « the great defect of [the] book, the want of story ».

This « want of story » induces the *Literary Gazette* for October 18, 1823 to consider the *Pioneers* « rather as a series of animated sketches, which would do credit to any tourist's note-book, than as a novel ». But, even as a sketch book, Cooper's work does not seem to be fully appreciated, the critic dealing mostly with its comic and humorous aspects :

Some of the characters are very well drawn : the busy, the important, the tiresome little sheriff, is true to the very life ; the lank apothecary ; the circumstantial lawyer ; the old Indian, Natty Bumppo, and his chivalrous companion in the stocks, Mr. Penguillan, or more familiarly, Ben Pump ; Mrs Hollister, and Remarkable Pettibone, are touched with much comic power. The scene in the stocks ; Ben Pump's journal ; the extracting the ball from Oliver's shoulder ; Captain Hollister, (an Irish sergeant settled in America), proving to his wife the excellent discipline of the Israelites, are excellent in their humour..

We must add... two or three portraits, not likenesses, we trust, for the credit of American countenances, just as a sample of this author's taste for painting the human face divine.

[There follow the portraits of Ben Pump, Remarkable Pettibone and Doctor Todd].

As a compensation, the *Newcastle Magazine* for January 1824 (6) warmly praises the novel from more than one point of

(6) Cf., pp. 35-37.

view, and does not in the least complain of the « want of story ». The opening paragraph is especially remarkable, for it might have been found in a most patriotic American periodical :

This is one of the most interesting novels we ever read ; and considering that many months have not elapsed since the Edinburgh Review asked in a tone of sarcastic triumph, « Who reads an American book ? » it is one of the most remarkable specimens of literary proficiency that ever crossed the Atlantic to be republished and admired by the mother country. If the American novelists proceed as vigorously as they have commenced, we fear they will soon leave the generality of English novel writers far behind them.

Then comes a comparison between the *Pioneers* and the *Spy*, in which the critic, though recognizing the merits of the latter, claims that « the *Pioneers* will be more prized in proportion as its subject is more peculiarly American ».

It follows that the most typically American characters — Indian John and Leatherstocking — are the first to attract the reviewer's notice :

There is a fine old relic of aboriginal America in the person of Indian John... His frequent recurrences to former days — his constantly priding himself in the superior perfections of his race — and his death by stoical self-devotion in the midst of a devouring conflagration — reverting with his last breath to his hopes of the red man's heaven, far away from the white persecutors of the native tribes — form an admirable picture.

There is, also, a sort of half Indian — a white man who had spent many years with the natives... The high spirit of this man — the haughtiness with which he disobeys the laws and pursues his sports, in defiance of the authorities — the wildness of his manners — the unbending tone of his language — and the poetical lamentations which he is perpetually pouring out upon the innocence and peace of his former solitude, render him a most effective and prominent character in the novel. His address to the parties who are pursuing him, after he has offended against a law which has been recently passed against hunting the deer except in particular months — and after he has levelled the hut in which he had spent the happiest years of his life, is most touching — it

is equal to anything by the author of *Waverley*, even the eloquence of Meg Merrilies and the native oratory of Edie Ochiltree.

Richard Jones is then mentioned as « a most singular and well drawn character » and, further on, Cooper is congratulated for the variety of arresting figures which stand out against the background of Templeton :

Nothing, indeed, pleased us more in the whole work, than the remarkable variety of character which the author has so naturally and inevitably crowded into his settlement — the singular meeting in one place, and often in one room, of French, Dutch, Scotch, Irish, English, and American — the combination of sailor, soldier, farmer, negro — of persons of the highest civilization with beings to whom a log-house is a palace — of men who have migrated from the busy world, and of men, who finding too much of the world, even in an incipient village, are preparing to journey farther into the wild.

The scenes peculiar to an American settlement next arouse the reviewer's enthusiasm :

We should not omit to mention, that a number of very curious customs and circumstances are illustrated or alluded to, in a manner that makes this book occasionally far superior in interest, as well as information to an ordinary novel.

Many such episodes are then cited, all of which are said to be « not only faithfully, but vigorously and sometimes eloquently described ».

The style alone is not entirely to the taste of the critic, but his strictures concern minor points only. Judge Temple is said *not* to revert to the Quaker forms of speech when angry, as the novelist has led us to expect. Then the use of *nigh* by for *near at hand*, and of Natty's phrase *as I once used to could*, cannot, of course, meet with the approval of an educated Englishman.

In October of the same year, JOHN NEAL'S comments in *Blackwood's* (7) are again supercilious and decidedly unpleasant:

(7) October 1824, p. 428.

PIONEERS — (observe the order in which these works have appeared — it looks well, for a young author, who grows bold with success) — a very heavy piece of repetition in all the best characters : some noble scenes : and a pretty considerable share of lead. LEATHER-STOCKING is true — we have known such a fellow.

The *Retrospective Review* for 1824, in a nominal review of Brockden Brown's *Arthur Mervyn* which is in fact a general article on American literature (8), quotes the panther scene and adds :

If there be a scene of more interest than this in any of the novels of the present day, we can only say that we do not know it. It should, however, be read, not as an insulated part, but in its due place in the story : and there will be found worthy also of especial attention, the old Indian who has survived his tribe ; Mr. Justice Temple and his daughter Elizabeth ; Mr. Oliver Edwards, and Mr. Richard Jones ; Billy Kirby, and Hiram Doolittle ; and above all, the hunter of the wilderness — « the Leather-stockings », — who abandons the dwellings of man for the homes of the serpent and the panther ; the infallible marksman, and the as infallible friend ; who comes upon our more eastern imaginations like an ungracious anomaly, and departs, like a dream, towards the setting sun, leaving the reader his friend for ever.

The *British Critic* for July 1826, in its article on several American novels (9), alludes to the defence of the *Pioneers* in a chapter of *Köningsmarke*, which, by the way, is attributed to Verplanck. The reviewer disapproves of the attack against the morality of Scott's novels, but cordially agrees with the American author as regards the merits of Cooper's work :

On one subject we perfectly agree with him, namely on the merits of the « *Pioneers* ». We can hardly believe that the work which English taste seems generally to distinguish as the best of Mr. Cooper's series of novels, should meet in his own country with the disparagement which its vindication in « *Köningsmarke* »

(8) Cf., p. 326.

(9) Cf., pp. 427 and 436.

should imply. At all events, it has secured for him, by tacit consent, an admission to those rights and honours of our own body corporate of literature, of which no other American except Washington Irving can boast.

Coming back to the *Pioneers* towards the end of the article, the reviewer comments upon it in greater detail. He is struck by the dignity which the permanence of danger imparts to the everyday life of the settlers. And there is also a fine study of Natty Bumppo ; « the real hero of the story, » whose affinity with Long Tom Coffin is skilfully indicated :

In an infant state of society like that described in « *The Pioneers* », the character of the old hunter stands out, as it is intended to do, in bolder relief than any of the other persons, including the beautiful and high-spirited Elizabeth Temple herself. Like Birch the pedlar, and Tom Coffin, he is the real hero of the scene in which he appears ; and indeed, the points of resemblance between the seaman and the back-woodsman are numerous in spite of their totally different vocations. Both are original conceptions of men engaged in hardy and adventurous pursuits, but as undebased by the contact of their species as was Adam in his primitive simplicity, and imbued with that intuitive sense of the sublimities of nature and religion which often exists in the minds of men too illiterate to give it utterance... Though both take as local and peculiar a tinge from the objects with which they have been conversant, as the aphid or chameleon, the cockswain is as unlike to a jolly Jack-tar as the Leatherstocking is to a thoughtless whooping huntsman.

In July 1827 Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine* (10) publishes an article on Chateaubriand and Cooper, which pays a fine tribute to the wild landscapes and heart-stirring scenes in the *Pioneers* :

In the « *Pioneers* » how various and huge are his pictures of the mountains and forests, whose old silence man has just begun to disturb ; and how insignificant do the encroachments of civilization appear amidst regions « consecrated to eldest time ! » Here

(10) Cf., p. 80.

is the adventure of Elizabeth Temple with the panther, which glares out on us with all the animation of one of Landseer's pictures ; the magnificent conflagration of the woods, and the escape of the young lovers from the flame ; and the festal death of the old Mohican in the cavern amidst the black vestiges of the fire, which is most heroic and affecting.

At the same date the *Monthly Magazine or British Register* (11), speaking of a second English edition of the *Pioneers*, flatly contradicts the *British Critic* when saying that it is a tale « very little known in this country ». Its comments, besides, are very perfunctory :

The story is quite a subordinate matter, though always strictly subservient to this main purpose — to exhibit the progress of a « clearing »...

Though inferior, very decidedly, we think, to the *Prairie*, here are some capital scenes of description — such as the pigeon shooting, when the air is darkened by their numbers, and dragging the lake for fish ; and the conflagration. The attempts at humour are of the Smollett cast and not unsuccessful.

The *Spirit of Literature* for October 30, 1830 cannot explain why the *Pioneers* has proved less popular than the *Spy*, except by means of a theory of its own that, in the series of Cooper's works, the odd numbers never were as successful as the even numbers :

The « *Pioneers* » followed, but did not meet with the same success, for no other reason that we can see but that it was the third novel, and consequently *odd*. The story, indeed, is bad, but there are excellent scenes in it, and the character of the old hunter is superfine. This tale contains more sketches of the manners and customs of America than all the rest of these novels put together ; and we cannot but regret that the want of patronage and experience drove the author back to the « blood-and-thunder » system. (12).

After this, the British critics casually mention the *Pioneers* in their general comments upon the *Leatherstocking Tales*, but

(11) Cf., pp. 84-85.

(12) Cf., p. 426.

no criticism of real importance occurs until D.-H. LAWRENCE publishes his *Studies in Classic American Literature*. His appreciation of the *Pioneers*, in the original version of these studies, is at once the most enthusiastic and the most poetical tribute ever penned on the first Leatherstocking novel :

There is a mixture of the Anglo-American novel and the Leatherstocking novel in *Pioneers*...

The book exists, really, as a wonderful and beautiful picture of an outpost village. It is England — but England lost on the edge of the unknown ; England more English and characteristic than England ever was, asserting itself in the toils of the great dark spirit of the Continent.

There is the actual village itself — the long, raw street of wooden houses, with wood-fires blinking and flashing through the uncurtained windows, in the winter nights. There is the curious, amusing « Hall » of the village, Judge Temple's somewhat fantastic replica of a squire's residence. The inn, with the drunken Indian ; the church, with the snowy congregation crowding to the fire ; the astounding Christmas abundance of the tables, that groaned as English tables never groaned, with weight of good things, splendid things to eat ; the turkey-shooting, on the snow ; the sports of the rough people ; then summer coming, with heavy clouds of pigeons, myriads of pigeons, destroyed in heaps ; the night fishing on the teeming, virgin lake ; the deer-hunting, the forests all green, the maple sugar taken from the trees — all this is given with a beauty and a magnificence unsurpassable...

No man could sufficiently praise the beauty and glamorous magnificence of Cooper's presentation of the aboriginal American landscape, the New World. We cannot think of the opening of *Pioneers*, as the sledge drives over the snow, the negro guiding the horses through the wild, precipitous forest roads, the Judge and his daughter folding themselves in furs as the twilight advances over the pine-dusky winter, without experiencing that strange, almost unbearable leap of enchantment such as we get only from the *Odyssey*. It is the magnificence of futurity flooding the heart. (13)

(13) Cf. *English Review*, March 1919, pp. 207-08. It should be noted that, when these studies were published in book form in 1924, the text — if not the idea — was often altered.

Curiously enough, D. H. Lawrence places Cooperstown on the shores of **Lake Champlain**.

France

A French translation of the *Pioneers* appeared in August 1823 — the very same year as the American and English editions — yet it does not seem to have been reviewed by French periodicals at that time. Occasional comments may have found their way into the daily press in 1823 or 1824, but it is in the general article on Cooper, published by the *Globe* for March 12, 1825, that we have found the first French criticism of the new work (1).

There is, however, nothing peculiarly French in the favourable opinions briefly expressed by the *Globe*. Like many Anglo-Saxon critics, the French reviewer (E.T.) thinks that the *Pioneers* is less popular than the *Spy* because it is over-burdened with descriptions. Like them, too, he evidently considers that the strength of the novel lies in the characters, particularly that of *Leatherstocking* :

Le Roman des *Planteurs (les Pionniers) ou les Sources du Susquehanna* est moins populaire que *L'Espion* ; et c'est la faute des longueurs dans lesquelles sont délayés des événements d'ailleurs intéressants. Il y a dans *les Pionniers* des contrastes de scène et des oppositions de caractère qui indiquent tout ce que pourra faire M. Cooper avec une plus grande expérience dans l'art de disposer les riches matériaux des sujets qu'il choisit. C'est un trait de génie que d'avoir mis en présence l'état sauvage et la société nouvelle en Amérique. Et que de caractères originaux réunis autour du juge Marmaduke et du jeune *chef* ! Mais surtout l'ancien soldat *Bas-de-Cuir*, devenu en quelque sorte plus sauvage que les sauvages eux-mêmes, est une création qui ne serait pas désavouée

(1) Cf., p. 395.

par le romancier qui a peint *Edie Ochiltree* (sic), autre philosophe de la même famille.

On July 2, 1827 another Cooper article in the *Globe* (2) is even less detailed concerning the *Pioneers*, but its author, F.A.S., is, as usual, more inclined to praise than E.T. :

La nouvelle des Pionniers... est un ouvrage principalement descriptif. Un petit nombre d'événements, qui se lient à une action d'ailleurs attachante, y semblent placés dans l'intention surtout d'amener ces descriptions. Que de mouvement dans ce tableau de la colonisation rapidement développée par l'esprit d'entreprise ! Et pourtant il y a du repos dans la manière de l'auteur. On voit qu'il s'est complu à retracer les lieux de son enfance, les scènes dont elle fut entourée... C'est un tableau d'intérieur, mais cet intérieur est celui d'une nouvelle colonie ; et de tout côté apparaissent des échappées de vue du désert (sic).

A philosophical interpretation of the character of Leatherstocking in general may also be quoted here, since it contains many references to his attitude in the *Pioneers* :

Sorte de médiateur entre la race indienne et la race blanche, entre la vie sauvage et la civilisation, il possède tout ce qu'il y a de bon dans l'une et dans l'autre..

Homme de la nature, poétique comme elle, il est une sorte de réalisation du premier rêve de Jean-Jacques. La loi est son ennemie ; car il y voit une invention humaine, étrangère à l'ordre naturel ; et son esprit, habitué à la vaste latitude du désert, ne saisit pas que la loi aussi découle d'une nécessité de l'ordre naturel, celle de l'association, causée par le contact des hommes, à mesure que l'espace se remplit. Aussi quand, à force de se heurter contre la loi, il finit par être vaincu par elle, tout en maudissant peut-être la loi nous ne pouvons la blâmer ; mais notre respectueuse sympathie accompagne le vieux chasseur au pilori, puis le suit quand, fuyant devant une civilisation qui lui répugne et le poursuit, devant un contrat social qu'il n'a point consenti et qui pourtant pèse sur lui, il abandonne, après les anciens maîtres du pays, un sol dont ils furent les premiers occupants, et va sur les savanes

(2) Cf., pp. 205-07.

lointaines chercher l'asile que pour quelques années encore le désert offre à l'indépendance individuelle que cerne la société. Ainsi, dans cette œuvre profonde [the three first Leatherstocking Tales], se trouvent en présence, sous les circonstances les plus favorables à tous deux, se heurtent et se renversent l'un par l'autre les deux rêves de Rousseau : l'homme de la nature, et le contrat social *unanimentement* consenti ; et sur leurs ruines domine le système de l'utilité de Bentham, jusqu'à ce que triomphe la terrible doctrine de Malthus.

In 1839 G. DE SAINT FARGEAU's *Revue des Romans* (3) merely gives a synopsis of the story, and, in 1844, LOUIS DE LOMÉNIE dismisses the *Pioneers* in a few words to deal at length with the *Last of the Mohicans* :

Le roman des *Pionniers*... fut le premier essai de Cooper dans un genre qu'il devait traiter avec un succès peut-être plus grand encore. Pour la première fois apparaît chez lui la pensée de mettre en présence deux ordres de civilisation ou plutôt la civilisation et la sauvagerie. Cette pensée n'est encore là qu'à l'état d'ébauche. Mais l'auteur en tirera plus tard un très-grand parti (4).

After this, the *Pioneers* is now and then praised in connection with the other Leatherstocking Tales, but it is seldom judged on its own merits.

Miss M.M. GIBB's work on the *Roman de Bas-de-Cuir* (5) may be mentioned here, since it was published in France and written in French. With regard to the plot, Miss Gibb is willing to take into account the author's avowed purpose of writing a « descriptive tale », but she finds Rev. Grant's sermon « interminable — et illisible ». Concerning the characters, she does not comment upon the humorous portraits so frequently praised by Anglo-Saxon reviewers. As for the heroine and her friend, Rev. Grant's daughter, they are quickly dismissed, « la désagréable Elizabeth Temple » being however preferred to Louisa Grant,

(3) Cf., p. 229.

(4) Cf. *Galerie des Contemporains*, vol. 8, end, pp. 13-14.

(5) Sorbonne Ph. D. (1927). Cf. pp. 54-94-69 and 78.

« l'ennuyeuse vierge » (6). But Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook are studied in great detail, and particularly praised for being closer to nature in the *Pioneers* than in any other Leatherstocking Tale :

Le Bas-de-Cuir des *Pionniers* est le plus naturel de tous. Voici le véritable chasseur Américain, habitant des bois, inculte, acerbe, original et bon. C'est le Natty que Fenimore Cooper a connu dans sa jeunesse, le pionnier du Kentucky dont on racontait les exploits partout dans l'Amérique civilisée. Il est forestier habile et excellent tireur, mais son adresse n'a rien de miraculeux. Il aime la nature sauvage et se trouve malheureux dans les villes ; pourtant, si son aversion est décidée (sic), elle n'est pas excessive, et il y a d'autres raisons de son déplaisir qu'un simple sentiment abstrait. Quand il parle des forêts qu'il aime, son lyrisme est d'autant plus convaincant qu'il est modéré. Ses défauts de caractère sont vraisemblables ; il est de nature coriace, quelquefois bourru, pas du tout le caractère angélique que le Chercheur de pistes serait devenu à soixante-dix ans. Il est naïf à un point qui aurait fait ricaner Œil-de-faucon, et son entêtement aurait attristé le Tueur de daims. Peu d'idéalisme et de romantisme dans le chasseur des *Pionniers*, c'est un homme à notre échelle, mélange de défauts et de qualités ; de sagesse et de préjugés, mais qui n'est pas sans charme ni dignité. Si Bas-de-Cuir est le plus grand personnage que Fenimore Cooper ait créé, nulle part, il n'est plus imposant que, lorsque, comme un vieux lion blessé, entouré de chacals, il donne libre cours à son indignation douloureuse... Cooper a-t-il eu un souvenir de *Guy Mannering* en écrivant ce chapitre des *Pionniers* ? S'il en est ainsi, l'influence a été heureuse...

Chingachgook suit la même courbe psychologique que Bas-de-Cuir. Il est naturel et simple dans *Les Pionniers*... Le portrait de Mohegan réfute, dans une certaine mesure, le reproche fait par plusieurs lecteurs des *Récits*, qui trouvent les Indiens embellis à l'excès.

(6) Cf. p. 94 : « Exhortée par son compagnon [sa compagne] à fuir une panthère, cette ennuyeuse vierge tombe promptement sur place, « comme la neige qui fond ».

Conclusion

While modern scholars are inclined to underrate the success of *Precaution*, they have a tendency to overrate that of the *Pioneers*. The record sale of February 1, 1823 caused LOUNSBURY to say : « Success was certain from the start ; but the degree of it outran all anticipation » (1), and his view of the matter has of course prevailed. Still, all contemporary accounts — whether American, British or French — conclusively show that Cooper was right in stating that his third novel was « only moderately successful », and that it was favoured by the critics rather than by the public at large. In the three countries, the average novel-reader sorely missed the breathless suspense he had experienced in reading the *Spy*, while the artists and men of letters were deeply impressed by the faithful and highly picturesque representation of American frontier life, and by the creation of that strikingly original character, Leatherstocking.

There is another important error to be guarded against. The lasting success of the *Leatherstocking Tales*, as a masterpiece of world-literature, should not lead us to imagine that European critics kept discussing the *Pioneers* long after they had ceased to comment upon the *Spy*. As a matter of fact, we have found no important British criticism of the *Pioneers* after 1830 — the beautiful appreciation by D.H. LAWRENCE excepted. Often enough, it is true, the *Leatherstocking Tales* as a whole were discussed, even after Cooper's death, but many critics did not go beyond general remarks, and those who did,

(1) Cf. p. 41.

dismissed the *Pioneers* in a few lines, in order to devote more space to the other works of the series. As for French criticisms, they were exceedingly scarce before 1830, and practically non-existent afterwards. (2)

With regard to the British periodicals, it should be observed that only one — the *Monthly Literary Register* — proved somewhat unfriendly. It is the sole periodical which found fault with the preface, and it evidently took pleasure in pointing out the « palpable imitations » of the Scotch novels. As a rule, British reviewers were delighted with the strong American flavour of the work. It is probably for this reason that in July 1826, the *British Critic* defined the *Pioneers* « the work which English taste seems generally to distinguish as the best of Mr. Cooper's series of novels. »

In the United States the attitude of the *North American Review* is particularly worthy of comment. Once more this leading periodical failed in its duty towards the national literature, since it waited more than three years before making known its approval of the *Pioneers*. This is all the more strange, as it never ceased to extol this novel in the years that followed ; so much so that, in 1852, it could declare that the *Pioneers* seemed « of all Cooper's works... the most likely to hold a permanent place in literature. » On the other hand GRISWOLD, influenced by Cooper himself, is to be remembered as having published the first lukewarm American appreciation. LOUNSBURY's comments are also rather cold.

Of course the critics are often at variance concerning minor points. While the *Atlantic Monthly* and D. H. LAWRENCE are struck with the poetry of the *Pioneers*, JOHN ERSKINE and CARL VAN DOREN praise the work for its intense realism. Again the *North American* (1826) considers that the old hunter in the *Pioneers* is more poetical than the scout in the *Mohicans* (3), but WILLIAM LYON PHELPS (1923) thinks exactly the reverse.

(2) Miss M. M. GIBB wrote her thesis in French, but she is a Canadian.

(3) So does S. F. C. in *Pages and Pictures* p. 129. In the *Mohicans*, she says, « The character was sketched even more forcibly, though with less of poetical light perhaps, than in the first book. It was the difference between vigorous manhood and venerable age. »

A third opinion is represented by BRYANT, JOHN ERSKINE, CARL VAN DOREN and the French critic E. T., since they judge that, on the whole, Cooper ennobled and improved his first conception of the character of Leatherstocking. With regard to Cooper's descriptive powers, the *Album* (E. 1823) — like the *North American* in its review of the *Spy* (1822) — complains of his excessive minuteness. On the contrary the *North American* for January 1838 claims that a lack of minuteness is responsible for the « haziness » of Cooper's landscapes.

Still, most reviewers are agreed on the choice of the striking episodes. The panther scene, the forest fire, the night fishing, the trial of Natty, and, to a lesser extent, the pigeon and the turkey shooting, are general favourites. The *plot* is unanimously considered the weak point of the work, while a marked improvement is noticed in the matter of *style*. Finally the *delineation of character* is, as usual, declared one of Cooper's best assets. The very number of the *dramatis personæ* — if one may use this term in connection with a « descriptive tale » — is deemed a great achievement in itself. *Leatherstocking* is recognized from the outset as an original character of the first order, and *Indian John* is judged worthy of him. The humorous characters do not pass unnoticed, especially in England where they are particularly relished. Comparatively little is said concerning the heroine and her friend, Louisa. Still Elizabeth Temple is staunchly supported by the *Portfolio*, DANA and the *British Critic*.

THE PILOT

America

In spite of Lounsbury's and Susan Fenimore Cooper's assertions to the contrary (1) — and even in spite of the fact that, according to *Niles' Weekly Register* (2), « The first edition, 3,000 copies, was disposed of in a few days » — the Pilot was not immediately successful in the United States, as is shown by Cooper's own statements and by the examination of the first American criticisms of the new work.

In his autobiographical notes Cooper refers twice to the reception of the Pilot, and in no uncertain terms :

This book was on a plan so novel, that the critics, if there are any in this country, did not know how to receive it. For several weeks its fate was doubtful. Its American reputation certainly came from the East, though the North American « damned it with faint praise » as it had previously done *The Spy*. In Europe, its success was quick and decided... This book was doubtfully received at home, but had great success in Europe from the start. Until we heard from England, Wiley and I fancied it a failure ; though Wiley certainly maintained it ought not to be one.

All these utterances — with the exception of the somewhat exaggerated denunciation of the *North American* — can be strongly supported by quotations from the contemporary periodicals.

(1) Cf. LOUNSBURY, p. 47 : « Its success, both in this country and in Europe, was instantaneous », and S. F. C., *Pages and Pictures*, p. 77 : « There could be no doubt as to its success. The success of the book in England was also decided. »

(2) Cf. Feb. 7, 1824, p. 357.

As usual Dennie's *Portfolio* (3) does not delay giving a long review of the new novel. But it is clear that, to use Cooper's own words, it « does not know how to receive it. »

The reviewer, while good-natured enough to deal playfully with Cooper's fling at the critics in the preface, is evidently puzzled by it.

On the very threshold of these volumes, we are encountered by a caution, which it behoves us to treat with all possible respect. The ingenious author, not having the fear of criticism before his eyes, and reckless of the resentment of the class of writers, who pursue that ungainful calling, has not scrupled to designate them as a parcel of « Lubbers ». « If they have common discretion » he says, « they will beware of exposing their ignorance »...

But if he has not written for the *ignorant* race of critics, we should be glad to learn what description of persons his book is intended to please. Not the ordinary class of novel readers, we suppose, because they never pretend to form an opinion of a volume, until they consult the oracles of *the periodical press*, who are now lords of the ascendant : — neither can we imagine that he calculated upon any other portion of the « land-lubbers », since those scenes upon which he seems to have chiefly expended his strength, are described in a dialect which is intelligible only on salt water. We confess, we are at a loss to reconcile this course with the invocation,

« List ! ye *landsmen* all to me »

which we find on his title page.

Under the circumstances, the reviewer seems to have found it safer to confine himself, almost entirely, to a mere summary of the plot ; while indulging occasionally in a rather exaggerated praise of the land scenes — some of which are quoted at length — or in an earnest censure of the author's excursions on an unknown and uncongenial element. His passing comments on the famous escape of the frigate and schooner from the reefs and breakers of the Scottish coast are typical of the latter mood :

We have now a very minute account of the manner in which

the boats and vessels are extricated from their hazardous situation, in which they had placed themselves, to get their pilot. We have luffing, and squaring, and tacking, and heaving, under the orders of this person, until even the seamen seem to be astonished. All this, no doubt, is done according to rule, and would pass the board of admiralty with approbation ; but we « landsmen » would rather enjoy the fruits of Mr. Cooper's fertile genius in another element.

As to the reviewer's attitude towards the novel as a whole, it is defined at the beginning and the end of the article :

The volumes, however, contain a variety of adventures, which lead us from page to page, with anxious expectation, as long as we remain on land ; but the author's tempests, his fights, his breakers, his wrecks, and indeed, all his nautical operations, we fear, will be thrown away upon many of those whose attention he has invoked...

In proportion to the lively interest with which we observe the progress of this writer, is our regret that he should have restricted the enjoyment of this production, by the undue admixture of maritime occurrences, detailed in the peculiar jargon of seamen. To such persons, all the circumstances to which we allude and the language in which they are described, present nothing new. They are, moreover, not precisely that description of readers whose approbation a man of letters should be ambitious to obtain. Mr. Cooper has given sufficient evidence that he has the means of enriching our native stock of literature in this department, and we cordially wish that he may go on rejoicing in his course.

As in the case of the *Spy*, the other great American periodicals seem to have awaited the verdict of England before venturing an opinion ; this explains why Cooper and his editor fancied the *Pilot* a failure until they heard of its success across the Atlantic. When the *United States Literary Gazette* and the *North American* reviewed the *Pilot*, in April 1824, favourable English appreciations of the new work had been available in America for several weeks already.

The comments in the first of these Boston periodicals are

particularly flattering, and it is likely that Cooper had the *United States Literary Gazette* (4) in mind when stating that the American reputation of the Pilot « certainly came from the East ».

At the very outset the reviewer ranks the new work above all the rest of Cooper's novels :

Mr. Cowper (sic) has one valuable faculty.. the faculty of improvement. Precaution was a poor book ; the Spy was a very good one, though not so good as the Pioneers ; and the Pilot we think better than either.. It was prophesied in some of our newspapers and literary journals that this last production would disappoint the sanguine and impatient expectation raised by its predecessors ; — but the Pilot has appeared, and every pledge, which the previous works of Mr. Cowper had given is fully redeemed.

Further on, the author is praised for his display of humour, pathos and eloquence ; for his sketching of human character and conduct ; and for his graphic pictures of the beauty or terrors of inanimate nature. Unfortunately, the true originality of the work, as a tale of the sea, is not pointed out by the critic — although Tom Coffin is said to be an entirely original character :

The scene is almost always on the ocean, and the principal characters are seamen ; of course a very large and valuable part of the book must lose much of its charm with those who have no acquaintance with sea terms or sea manners.. « Long Tom » is perfectly original, and is drawn to the life. He is one of a class of men who are peculiar, not merely to this country, but to a very small part of our country ; who leave the little island, which cradled them amid the waves, and wander over the ocean, until it is to them as a home, and dry land becomes a strange thing ; — and his person, habits, tastes, and thoughts are portrayed with great power and success.

On the other hand, the mysterious pilot is considered as somewhat of a failure :

(4) Cf. April 1824, p. 6.

We think Mr. Cowper fails most in the management of the Pilot's historical character. If he intends him to be Paul Jones indeed (which we infer from the preface and not from the work itself), more should have been said of his origin, connexions, and early history, that the personal identity of the character might be more obvious. If this was impracticable, we think it would have been better to have omitted all allusion to this remarkable name.

As for the rest of the characters, they are not deemed worthy of special comment, with the exception of the two fair cousins, who are, however, quickly dismissed as belonging to a worn out pattern :

There is nothing new in the female characters ; the soft sweetness of one is contrasted with the fire and vivacity of the other, but there is little in either, which novel-heroines have not almost worn out.

The plot is far more to the taste of the reviewer, who praises Cooper for the « skill which constantly sustains the interest we feel in the story from the first to the last page » — a quality which is the more conspicuous as « in the *Spy* and the *Pioneers* passages of great power and beauty are separated by rather dreary intervals. »

Unexpectedly enough, the plot is also praised as evincing a certain regard of the author for the three classical unities :

It has been said of the works of this author, as a reproach that many pages are usually occupied in detailing the occurrences of a short period. Novel readers may be displeased with this, because they are accustomed to find in their favourite works, a history of the hero's life and conversation during his youth at least, if not his manhood ; but we are not disposed to find fault with Mr. Cowper's fashion of managing this matter. A novel is something between a poem and a drama, and is not altogether without the jurisdiction of the laws, which should govern them. Upon the question of the unities, we are more persuaded by Dr. Johnson's arguments than by Shakespeare's example ; that is, while we admit that good poems and plays have been written without much observance of the unities of place, time, or action, yet we think any work of the imagination may be the better for

some regard to them. Of our author's practice in this particular, it will be enough to say, that to the last chapter of the second volume, the story has advanced but very few days, and the characters scarcely wander out of sight of the spot where they are first introduced.

Finally the style of the *Pilot* is adjudged more polished and more satisfactory than that of the preceding productions of Cooper's pen :

It is rather a prevailing folly among living writers of note, to be vain of writing easily and rapidly ; and we are glad to find some reason for thinking our author exempt from this delusion. The whole work has the appearance of having benefited somewhat by careful revision... In this respect the *Pilot* is better than its predecessors.

The article in the *North American* (5) is certainly far less complimentary, but it is hard to believe that the reviewer's purpose was « to damn the book with faint praise », as Cooper would have it. As in the case of the *Spy*, it is evident that the critic (6) is particularly afraid of betraying an undue partiality for an American work, and that — in order to avoid falling into what he considers an unpardonable sin — he constantly strives to tone down the expression of his approval or of his admiration. Still, if one pays attention to the substance of his judgments, rather than to the terms in which they are couched, one cannot fail to note that, in their unostentatious way, they claim much for the *Pilot* and its author. Witness, for instance, the beginning of the article, concerning Cooper's titles to a permanent place in American Literature :

... if an author really succeeds in adding something to the permanent intellectual stock ; if on the whole, he produces objects worthy to remain and be admired, he is entitled to our good will and praise, and ought not to be judged by the minor imperfections, the *quædam maculæ*, from which no work of art is free.

(5) Cf. April 1824, pp. 314-29.

(6) This time, however, the reviewer is not Gardiner, but W. PHILLIPS.

The author of the Pilot seems to us to have fully and decidedly established this claim upon the public in his favor, as he has produced works, which well deserve to be, and will be, a permanent part of our literature ; and in a province where very few adventurers have preceded him with any tolerable success.

Besides, in the synopsis of the novel which follows, the reviewer cannot help growing almost enthusiastic over some of the sea-scenes. If he does not fully realize their originality, he quotes at length the whale hunt, Long Tom's preparations for the fight, and part of the wreck of the Ariel, and he adds : « We can hardly name the author, who would not have reason to be proud to have described the wreck of the Ariel, with the incidents attending it ».

With regard to the characters, the critic is, on the whole, favourably impressed. Cooper is given credit for having invented, in the mysterious pilot, a character which ably plays, in a modern story, the part of « the gods of ancient writers and the witches, fairies, and other supernatural beings, introduced into the older of the modern writers of fiction, to bring the other personages into situations, which would otherwise be too improbable, or help them out when they could not retrieve themselves ». Of course the reviewer is aware that Paul Jones « is probably also intended by the author to give something of historical reality to the story », but he seems to believe that he is needed chiefly as a *machine* :

In the conclusion of the story, it is quite excusable to hurry to a happy result, with a flush of good luck, in the death of rich uncles, liberality of the government, exposure of knavery, clearing up of misunderstandings, the long deferred requital of love, and other pleasing occurrences. But it shows poverty of invention to bring affairs into such a conjuncture in the midst of the action, that unless the wind changes, or some of the personages are killed off, the story must end. Some extraordinary and powerful agent is needed for the trying occasions, about whom the author casts something of mystery and obscurity, that the reader may magnify to himself everything belonging to this personage, and give credit to the prodigies told of him. The Pilot is a personage of this description.

But Paul Jones is « quite a secondary character » in the novel, so far at least as the « reader » is concerned. The « hero of the piece » is Tom Coffin, « our very pleasant acquaintance... the cockswain from Nantucket, whose father was a Coffin and his mother a Joy ». The reviewer objects, however, to the comparison of Long Tom with Neptune, and to his premature death, which is fortunately compensated by the survival of Boltrope :

We should have been more pleased, had not the appearance of long Tom with his iron visage, climbing up by the channels of the cutter, with his grizzled locks drenched in salt water, and bearing his harpoon, reminded the author of Neptune and his trident ; which we think a disparagement of long Tom...

The death of long Tom would have been a sore calamity to the reader, had not *Boltrope* survived, with whom he is now made more particularly acquainted, and who now supplies the place in the dialogue, action, and interest of the story, which, but for some such successor, would have been left vacant by the death of the cockswain. We shall not be understood to say, that the two characters are alike.

Among the other male characters, the critic singles out Mr. Merry, the young midshipman, « a very happily conceived character... well supported throughout the story », and Captain Borroughcliffe, who is said to have been « hit off » in a « bold, free and masterly style ».

As for the female characters, the reviewer evidently takes pains not to criticize them so severely as he might have done :

[The character of Alice Dunscombe] is not badly conceived, but it is not sustained very successfully. Her argument with the Pilot upon the subjects of loyalty and love is too set, and makes one of the very few parts of the book of which there seemed to be too much. But we may be mistaken, for it has been admired by those who are good judges..

We are not disposed absolutely to find fault with Katharine Plowden, though we doubt whether she is really so sprightly, free, and debonair, as she affects to be..

[Cecilia Howard] is intended as a conspicuous figure in the piece, and were she the only one, we

should hardly think it too much to say, that her portrait bears marks of being done by an unpractised artist.

Several incidents connected with the plot of the story are approved of :

The conversation between Boroughcliffe and the refugee, over the madeira, is kept up with great spirit, and does not flag on the introduction of the Pilot, Griffith, and Manual... The incident of the detention and detection of these three persons is particularly well managed... The author seems to consider the drowning of Dillon to be in the nature of an execution, for which he has taken care to qualify him, and to which the reader is well enough reconciled.

A few others, however, are not so satisfactory :

The author seems to make some effort in this consultation, [on board the frigate], and, as it appears to us, without very brilliant success... what we formerly said of some parts of the *Spy*, is applicable to some of these scenes, in which the ladies bear a part, which sometimes labor and disappoint the reader... Whatever may be said in defence of the propriety of the quarrel between Griffith and Barnstable, we mean its consistency with the characters given to the two, and its probability, under the circumstances related, it certainly gives a rude shock to the interest in Barnstable, before excited in the reader. As far as this incident is made the occasion of showing off Cecilia Howard, we do not think it of much importance ; but the other use made of it, in the reconciliation of the two lieutenants after the subsequent battle is natural and happy, and justifies forcing circumstances a little in order to introduce it, if this could not be otherwise done... The murmurings and jokes of the men, as they are marching to the shore, even admitting them to be both characteristic and true, as they indeed seem to be, have hardly enough in them to recommend them to the reader.

From the point of view of style, the *North American* finds fault with the « excessive minuteness » which it had criticized in the *Spy*, but its tone is far more friendly :

In regard to the style of execution, the work has one fault

which was mentioned in our notice of the Spy ; it is in some instances, and more especially where the author speaks in his own person, overloaded with epithets, and the detail of particular circumstances. The author leaves too little to his readers, and from his solicitude to omit nothing of the quality, degree, and manner of everything related or described, he impairs the vivacity and force of the expression.

Another remark on the style of the Pilot applies to American literature in general, and might well be borne in mind by some of Cooper's critics :

This, like the preceding stories of the author, is thoroughly American, in one respect too much so ; as, for one instance, where Colonel Howard is said to take a little time to remove the perspiring effects of the unusual toil from his features, a sort of writing, which is too much in use with us, and may be said, perhaps, to constitute a national characteristic of our literature, if there be such a thing. No doubt some readers have a liking for passages of this sort, — « the more's the pity. »

It should be noted, also, that this remark is qualified by the lines immediately preceding it, and in which Cooper is somewhat censured for the realism of some of his descriptions :

Some few passages are perhaps a little too harsh, as in the battle, one « buries his weapon in the heart of one of the enemy, » so long Tom « pinned the English Captain to the mast with his harpoon. » We do not think that the agonies of Dillon, in drowning, are too palpably given, the reader being reconciled to the exhibition of them, by the hatred and loathing he had before conceived towards the creature. But without some good reason of this sort, a vivid display of extreme physical suffering, ghastly objects, or horrid cruelty, are more shocking than interesting. Such descriptions do not require great skill in a writer ; they may, however, be introduced with great effect, where the reader is fully prepared for them.

The conclusion of the review, though couched in moderate terms, shows that the New England critic has, in spite of himself, fallen under the spell of the author's glowing patriotism —

especially when connected with naval matters — and this is a tribute that Cooper certainly overlooked when he bitterly complained of the attitude of the *North American* :

The choice of incidents and actors, and the frequent allusions to our history, manners and habits, make the story strike deep into the feelings of American readers ; and by implicating the tale with our naval history, the author possesses himself of one of the few positions from which our national enthusiasm, is accessible... We have a commonplace, hackneyed sort of enthusiasm, on the subject of liberty, republican principles, etc. ; but this is so common a theme of declamation in all assemblies, from Congress to the bar room, that it is ordinary and tame, except now and then, when raised for the moment by some fortunate effort, or remarkable brilliancy. But in the subject of our naval skill and prowess, although we are not willing to confess it, we are, yet, real enthusiasts. This is a string to which the national feeling vibrates certainly and deeply ; and this string the author has touched with effect.

It appears, however, that some New Englanders at least were proof against the infectious patriotism displayed in the *Pilot*. In February 1825 the *New Haven Christian Spectator* ; conducted by an Association of Gentlemen (7), deplores that Cooper should find no better way of serving his country than by writing idle tales. Still its appreciation of the *Pilot*, from a purely literary standpoint, is interesting and valuable enough, in spite of its severity. Considering Cooper's work as an « imitation Waverley novel », and comparing it with five others, viz : *Saratoga*, *The Spectre of the Forest*, *The Witch of New-England*, *Hobomoc*, and *A Peep at the Pilgrims in 1636*, it says :

In respect to the interest of the narrative, and the skill with which the plot is conducted, and the power and vividness of the execution, « *The Pilot* » is unquestionably superior to all its competitors. It is evidently written with care, and by a man of very considerable talents. The action is rapid and varied, giving the author an opportunity of describing, in the history of a few days, sea-fights, and tempests, and a shipwreck, and the taking of a

(7) Cf., p. 87.

whale ; all which are so well done, that we should have known, even if he had not intimated it, that he has « seen a whale ». Besides this we have the common-place of a novel, such as mistakes and disguises, stratagems and counter-stratagems, the whispering of lovers, and the listening of spies, imprisonments and escapes, unexpected distress, and un hoped for deliverance ; all so craftily woven together as to create a deep and feverish interest. But the proper way of testing the merit of such a work, is to return to it again and again, after the interest of the story is exhausted, and thus to study the skill with which characters are drawn, and the consistency with which they are sustained. The *Waverley* novels will stand this test ; and at every new perusal they disclose new beauties. But he who applies it to the *Pilot*, will find that though its author has been remarkably successful in a few caricature delineations, his other characters are failures almost equally remarkable. His two heroines are astonishingly affected and uninteresting and though they are fairly matched with their lovers, we can see nothing about them unless it be the « thirty thousand dollars », that could tempt a discreet bachelor into matrimony. Nor is he more fortunate in his only historical personage — the pilot, alias Mr. Gray, alias Paul Jones, — a silent, starched, mystery-loving man in a « pee-jacket, » who always comes just when he is most needed ; who always does just what nobody else could do, and who bears, even less resemblance to the Paul Jones of history, than the Mr. Harper who figures in the *Spy* does to General Washington. It would be no doubt a very useless question to ask this writer, whether he can do nothing better for his country and for the world than to indite such novels ; and we shall therefore content ourselves with suggesting to him that his style betrays a continual effort to be smart, and that it were better for him, if he will write, to say what he has to say, without trying to say it so exquisitely.

It is worthy of remark that not one of the above reviewers seems to have realized that the *Pilot* belonged, in fact, to a new literary genre. They even seem to have deliberately avoided the comparison of Cooper with Smollett which occurs in practically all the English reviews of the time.

The *New York Mirror* for August 11, 1827 is therefore to be congratulated for having devoted a few lines to this comparison, although it does not really attempt to differentiate Cooper's manner from that of Smollett :

The Pilot, perhaps, added more to Mr. Cooper's reputation than any novel he has produced since the Spy. Though nautical affairs have often been successfully introduced into works of fiction, especially by Smollett, those parts of the Pilot where they are interwoven with the narrative, possess almost as much freshness and novelty as if they had there been first used as materials for the construction of a romance. The commonest reader may perceive that those passages were written from experience and observation. The incidents, highly wrought as they are, have a wonderful air of reality, and all the *novel* characters seem to own an individual existence. They have all more or less of the distinguishing characteristics of the sailor, yet no two of them are alike (8).

The reviewer's praise of Long Tom is particularly warm, and it is to be noted that the similarity between the cockswain of the Ariel and Leatherstocking is considered a merit, not a fault :

There is one [character], however, who stands proudly pre-eminent above the rest, and, like Leather-stocking, may claim a station among the noblest of Fancy's creations. It is scarcely necessary to mention, that we allude to Long Tom. The mariner and the hunter, different as they are in external features, are kindred spirits — souls of the same order, cased in bodies of different cast, and placed in opposite situations. They have the same simplicity and singleness of heart, imperturbable courage, and devotion to the cause of patriotism and friendship — the same exemption from the brutal rudeness and ferocity common among men of their respective classes ; and they are alike inflexibly attached to the mode of living that each from childhood has been inured to. Long Tom is precisely what Leather-stocking would have been had he been born at sea, and bred to the occupation of a mariner.

With regard to the other features of the Pilot, however, this New York critic is much more severe than many English reviewers :

In this novel, however, the interest flags the moment we leave the company of sailors. Among the un-marine characters, almost

(8) Cf., p. 39.

every thing is forced and artificial — the dialogue is uninteresting, and many of the incidents improbable and melo-dramatic. The reader seems infected with Tom Coffin's passion for the sea — the moment the narrative obliges him to land, he is troubled with *ennui*, and rejoices when he again approaches the wave.

In April 1831, a reviewer of the *Water Witch* in the *North American* (9) recalls with admiration the wreck of the *Ariel*, but objects to the rather insignificant part ascribed to Paul Jones towards the end of the novel :

He has made the ship emphatically a thing of life ; we are interested in its fortunes, as we sympathize in those of a living being ; and when the graceful *Ariel* is dashed upon the rock, we hardly wonder at the feeling which tempts the old mariner to share its fate. . . The Pilot excites strong interest at first, because we expect him to throw aside his mysterious disguise, and reveal himself as the man-of-war emerges from the mist ; but he dwindles at the close into a dim and shadowy sketch.

In June 1835, the *American Quarterly Review* (10) loudly proclaims Cooper's « entire originality », and his undisputed superiority over Smollett, but seems to forget that the latter wrote *Roderick Random* as well as *Peregrine Pickle* :

The three novels of Mr. Cooper, the scene of which is laid upon the sea, (*Pilot*, *Red Rover*, and *Water Witch*), are entirely *sui generis*. The first of these was published in 1824, and in the preface Mr. Cooper says, « He will probably be told that Smollett has done all this before him, and in a much better manner ». It must be a fresh water critic who would give any such opinion. « Mr. Penguillum », as Remarkable « Pitty-Patty-Prettybones » calls him, is perhaps of the Hatchway, Pipes, and Trunnion school ; but what parallel can be drawn between any of Smollett's sea characters and those of Mr. Cooper, in the three works whose names we have just given ? What comparison can be made between the sketches of sailors high and dry on shore, and the citizens of the deep engaged in all the wild adventures of their

(9) Cf. p. 16-17.

(10) Cf. p. 415 (general article).

terrific element ? There is as much difference between the sailors of Cooper and Smollett, as between a whale blowing and sporting among the icebergs, and a butt of train oil in a New Bedford warehouse. The American is eminently the poet of the ocean, which, till his time, was in the condition of those who lived before Agamemnon. We always thought that Byron, with his sea-tastes, had a heavy loss in dying without a sip of this new gush from the head fount of poetry. All the events of the waters — the storm, the calm, the chase, the battle, the wreck, the fire — have been commemorated by Cooper in language to which even the lofty rythm of the Spenserian stanza could add neither grace nor eloquence. And what a host of characters has he evoked from the vastly deep... And where in all fiction will you find the better of the simple-hearted coxswain of the *Ariel*..

Long Tom is indeed, as with Natty Bumppo, the real hero of the *Pilot* — his harpoon decides the conflict with the *Alacrity* ; and with the loss of the *Ariel*, as poetical a creation as her namesake of the drama, much of the interest of the book ceases...

The North American Review for January 1838 (11) does not overlook the naval chapters of *Roderick Random*, but it is none the less quite positive as to Cooper's originality. It goes even so far as to claim that his fame will ultimately rest on his naval novels, and that he is superior to both Captain Marryatt and Michael Scott. As to the *Pilot*, it is preferred to the *Red Rover* and *Water Witch* :

We gladly turn to that class of his novels, on which, we believe our author's reputation will ultimately depend. He has opened a new mine of romance, by displaying the interest that attaches to a sailor's life, and the fortunes of the sea ; and his success has been attested in the usual way, by a crowd of imitators. We call him first in this department of novel-writing, without forgetting Smollett, who has executed broad and vigorous caricatures of the sailor's manners and habits, but has given no real pictures of life upon the ocean. *Roderick Random* goes to sea, but his story on board relates to the characters whom he met, and does not turn immediately upon incidents connected with the vastly deep. Cooper gives us the ocean itself, in all its moods.

(11) Cf. pp. 12-13 (general article).

« Calm or convulsed, in breeze, or gale, or storm »

And man also is presented, modified in character by his peculiar occupation and locality, energetic, daring, and skilful, the sport of the waves in their wildest moments, or eluding their blind force by his contriving ingenuity. The contest of human skill with the angry elements, carried on upon the noble theatre of the illimitable waters, is no theme to be touched by a faltering and unskilful hand. The sublimity is in the subject, and no artificial coloring is required to heighten the effect. Simple, but graphic strokes of description, and thorough acquaintance with the different aspects of the heavens and the ocean, with the management of a ship, and the peculiarities of sailors, are the secret of our author's success in his maritime sketches. We prefer the *Pilot* to the two other novels belonging to this class, for it is written in that calm and subdued manner, which evinces the quiet consciousness of power. Probability is not strained to produce striking events, or to get up an effective picture of movements at sea... Captain Marryatt and the author of *Tom Cringle's Log*, have been most successful in following the lead of our novelist upon the sea. We claim a superiority for Mr. Cooper over them both.

In June of the same year, the *Southern Literary Messenger's* (12) brief comments upon the *Pilot* remind one of the review in the *United States Literary Gazette* for April 1, 1824 :

[It] was published in the year 1824, and forthwith became popular. The time embraced by the whole book, excepting the last chapter, is less than seventy-two hours. It is undoubtedly one of the best, as it is certainly the most finished of Mr. Cooper's fictions.

In 1845, W. GILMORE SIMMS pays a memorable tribute to the grandeur of Paul Jones in the opening chapters of the novel :

Take for example the character of the « *Pilot* », in the rapid and exciting story of that name. Here is a remarkable instance of the sort of interest which Mr. Cooper's writings are chiefly calculated to inspire. Marble could not be more inflexible than this cold, immovable, pulseless personage. He says nothing, shows

(12) Cf. p. 375 (a general article reprinted in the *New Yorker* for June 23, 1838, pp. 211-12).

nothing, promises nothing. Yet we are interested in his very first appearance. Why and how ? Naturally enough by the anxiety with which he is sought and looked for ; — by the fact that he promises nothing, yet goes to work, without a word, in a manner that promises everything. We feel, at a glance, that if any mortal man can save the ship, he is the man. Why is this ? Simply because he goes to work, without a word, as if it was in him to do so ; as if a calm consciousness of power was his possession ; as if he knew just where to lay his hands, in what direction to expend his strength. He shows *the capacity for work*, and this constitutes the sort of manhood upon which all men rely in moments of doubt or danger. Yet he gives you no process of reasoning — he has no word save that which commands obedience — he neither storms, implores, nor threatens — he has no books, he deals in no declamation. He is the ideal of an abstract but innate power, which we acknowledge and perhaps fear, but cannot fathom. All is hidden within himself, and, except when at work, he is nothing — he might as well be stone. Yet around him, — such a man — a wonderful interest gathers like a halo — bright and inscrutable — which fills us with equal curiosity and reverence. With him, a man of whom we know nothing, — whom we see now for the first time, — whom we may never see again, whom we cannot love — whom we should never seek ; and with his ship — timbers, tackle, ropes, spars and cordage, — a frail fabric, such as goes to and fro along our shores, in our daily sight, without awakening a single thought or feeling ; — with ship and man we grow fascinate beyond all measure of ordinary attraction. In his hands the ship becomes a being, instinct with life, beauty, sentiment — in danger, and to be saved ; — and our interest in her fate, grows from our anxiety to behold the issue, in which human skill, courage and ingenuity, are to contend with storm and sea, rocks and tempest — as it were, man against omnipotence. Our interest springs from our curiosity rather than from our affections. We do not care a straw for the inmates of the vessel. They are very ordinary persons that one man excepted — and *he* will not suffer us to love him. But *manhood*, true manhood, is a sight, always, of wondrous beauty and magnificence. The courage that looks steadily on the danger, however terrible, the composure that never swerves from its centre under the pressure of unexpected misfortune ; — the knowledge that can properly apply its

strength, and the adroitness and energy, which, feeling the force of a manly will, flies (*sic*) to their task, in instant and hearty obedience ; these form a picture of singular beauty, and must always rivet the admiration of the spectator. We regard Mr. Cooper's « Pilot » — breasting the storm, tried by, and finally baffling all its powers, as the Prometheus in action — inflexible, ready to endure, isolated, but still human in a fond loyalty to all the great hopes and interests of humanity (13).

Two years later, GRISWOLD is content to draw largely from Cooper's autobiographical notes, but with so little care that he contradicts himself as regards the reception of the Pilot :

The Pilot succeeded. The success of the Pilot was at first a little doubtful in this country ; but England gave it a reputation which it still maintains. It is due to Boston to say that its popularity in the United States was first manifested there. I say *due* to Boston, not from considerations of merit in the book, but because, for some reason, praise for Mr. Cooper from New England, has been so rare... America has no original literature, it is said. Where can the model of the Pilot be found ?... It is one of the most remarkable novels of the time, and everywhere obtained instant and high applause (14).

In November 1849 the *Democratic Review* (15) announces the appearance of the Pilot, in Putnam's edition of Cooper's works, and lays stress upon its originality :

The « Pilot » on its first appearance, met with universal favor, and became the model for a large class of sea stories, a taste for which was awakened in the public mind by the grace and vividness with which Mr. Cooper introduced his seamen to the reading public.

One month later, *Holden's Dollar Magazine* (16) states that the Pilot has become a classic, and that the lapse of time has

(13) Cf. *Views and Reviews*, pp. 220-21.

(14) Cf. *The Prose Writers of America*, 1847, p. 264.

(15) Cf. p. 476.

(16) Cf. p. 764.

made the various characters in this novel shrink into insignificance by the side of Long Tom Coffin :

Mr. Cooper may claim the honor of being the inventor of sea novels — or rather ship-romances, for his sea stories are rather the adventures of ships than of sailors — and, like all other inventors, he has had a host of imitators, not one of whom have (*sic*) equalled their master. Marryatt's sea stories are framed on a wholly different model from that which the genius of our nautical romancer invented. In this new edition of the Pilot, which very properly follows the Spy in the handsome republication of these national novels, the author gives a history of his productions which will doubtless be much more interesting to our readers than anything we could say in respect to a work which has now become a classic. Long Tom Coffin is the one character of Mr. Cooper's sea stories, under various names, as Leather Stockings is his hero of the Prairie and the Backwoods. Long Tom is as well known as any historical personage, but of the other names of the Pilot not one is ever alluded to.

On the occasion of Cooper's death, the *New York Evening Post* does not fail to consider the Pilot as one of Cooper's best titles to fame :

Shortly after the success of the Pioneers had made Mr. Cooper our first novelist, he achieved a triumph on the sea as signal as that he had first won in the forests. His romance of the Pilot, followed as it has since been at intervals by the Red Rover, the Water-Witch, the Two Admirals, Wing and Wing, etc., placed him at the head of nautical novelists, where he still stands, without a peer, and almost without a rival. The Long Tom Coffin of the Pilot is as popular as the Scout, and, as a piece of sailor characterization, will maintain its rank by the side of the well known Trunnions and Pipes of the British humorists. (17).

The *North American Review* for January 1852 still prefers the Pilot to all other sea tales by the same pen :

The Pilot is usually considered the best of Cooper's sea tales. It is in truth a masterpiece of his genius ; and although the rea-

(17) Reprinted in *Littell's Living Age* for October 1851, p. 87.

der is apt to pass with impatience over the long conversations among the ladies at St. Ruth's and between Alice Dunscombe and the disguised Paul Jones, yet he is amply repaid when he follows the author to his congenial element. The description of the wreck of the Ariel, and the death of Long Tom Coffin, can scarcely be spoken of in terms of too much admiration. Long Tom is to Cooper's sea tales what Leatherstocking is to the novels of the forest, a conception so original and forcible, that posterity will hardly suffer it to escape from remembrance (18).

Shortly after, in his *Memorial Discourse*, BRYANT fittingly dwells upon the originality of the Pilot and singles out Long Tom and Boltrope as worthy of special praise. He is not sure, however, that the Pilot is « in all respects » Cooper's best tale of the sea.

His next work was the *Pilot*, in which he showed how, from the vicissitudes of a life at sea, its perils and escapes, from the beauty and terrors of the great deep, from the working of a vessel on a long voyage, and from the frank, brave, and generous, but peculiar character of the seaman, may be drawn materials of romance by which the minds of men may be as deeply moved as by any thing in the power of romance to present. In this walk, Cooper has had many disciples, but no rival. All who have since written romances of the sea have been but travellers in a country of which he was the great discoverer, and none of them all seemed to have loved a ship as Cooper loved it, nor have been able so strongly to interest all classes of readers in its fortunes. Among other personages drawn with great strength in the *Pilot*, is the general favorite, Tom Coffin, the thorough seaman, with all the virtues, and one or two of the infirmities of his profession, superstitious, as seamen are apt to be, yet whose superstitions strike us as but an irregular growth of his devout recognition of the Power who holds the ocean in the hollow of his hand ; true-hearted, gentle, full of resources, collected in danger, and at last calmly perishing at the post of duty, with the vessel he has long guided, by what I may call a great and magnanimous death. His rougher and coarser companion, Boltrope, is drawn with scarcely less skill, and with a no less vigorous hand.

In June, *the New York Quarterly* (19) finds that Cooper's superiority over Marryatt lies in the fact that he is a poet, not only in the description of the ocean in its various moods, but also in the creation of such characters as Long Tom Coffin :

You will find parallels in Marryatt for Boltrope, or Fidd, or almost any of the characters which observation can supply, but none for Long Tom, or the Rover, which the creative power of imagination alone could conceive.

In the same year H. T. TUCKERMAN's essay on Cooper (20) points out that Long Tom, « the simple-hearted coxswain, who draws you to him in life by his earnestness and purity, the defects as well as the beauties of his character, and rises almost to the grandeur of martyrdom in his death », is a striking instance of Cooper's power of « elevating the lowly by the force of a high moral principle ».

At the time of the Darley edition of Cooper's works, the *National Quarterly Review* (21) for September 1860 attempts a very awkward comparison between the *Pilot* and *Roderick Random*, in order to justify Cooper's claim to the « Empire of the Sea » :

It was the *Pilot* which first attracted the attention of Sir Walter Scott, and caused « the empire of the sea » to be awarded by acclamation to the author, as having produced the most truthful, lively, and interesting story of ocean scenery and sea-life, ever written. The only one that approaches it in point of genuine merit is Smollett's « *Roderick Random* ». But the latter is too incoherent : its incidents are too awkwardly grouped — it is too vague in its purpose to claim a place beside *The Pilot* in the mind of any one who has any just idea of the relation which art should bear to nature, or nature to art, in the construction of a story. In short, the conduct of Roderick to his old, humble, but attached and faithful friend Strap, is of a character to render him unworthy of fellowship with any of the nobler creations of

(19) Cf. p. 225. The article is by Prof. G. W. GREENE.

(20) Cf. *Homes of American Authors*, p. 194.

(21) Cf. pp. 301-302 and 314.

Cooper. Whatever may be the faults of the latter's style, however inartistic the construction of his plots, however much he generally fails in imparting to his female characters that grace and ease of manners which we most admire in the gentler sex, he is never licentious like Smollett, who represents Strap as marrying a prostitute, in compliance with the advice of Roderick.

The comparison between Cooper and Marryatt is even worse :

And if we compare our author's works to those of Captain Marryat, still more obvious will be the superiority of the former. « The Phantom Ship », « Midshipman Easy », and « Peter Simple », are pleasing tales. But the best of them lack the adventurous spirit, the wonderful variety, the rapid succession of incidents, and above all that truthfulness to nature, and striking individuality in the portraiture which are distinguishing characteristics of the « Spy », the « Red Rover », and the « Water Witch ».

The following year, SUSAN FENIMORE COOPER surprised no doubt many admirers of the Pilot by stating that Cooper had come to be dissatisfied with both Paul Jones and Long Tom :

With the character of Paul Jones, as given in « The Pilot », Mr. Cooper, at a later day, was himself dissatisfied. It was not sufficiently true to reality. The pilot of the frigate was represented as a man of higher views and aims, in a moral sense, than the facts of the life of Paul Jones would justify. The commander of the Ranger was in truth a bold and daring adventurer, a skilful seaman, a brave partisan, an ambitious man but he was scarcely the enthusiast in private feeling, in political views, described in the pilot of the frigate. The author would gladly have severed entirely the slight historical link between the two, and left the pilot as vaguely connected with the annals of the country, as the ship he steered.

With Long Tom Coffin, also, he was, in his own last years less satisfied than many of his readers. As he looked back at the character, in the maturity of long experience, he saw it with a clearer view, a greater fulness of conception, a more complete

finish of detail — he considered it as a sketch only, and would gladly have wrought up the sketch of the old salt, a man after his own heart, to a finished picture, as he has done with Natty Bumppo. Of the two characters he considered that of Boltrope better, perhaps, as a piece of workmanship than that of the old Nantucket hero (22).

These statements, however, do not seem to have greatly modified the usual estimate of the characters concerned. The *Atlantic Monthly* for January 1862 (23) grants that Boltrope has been unduly neglected, but still considers Long Tom the equal of Natty Bumppo :

Long Tom Coffin may be described as Leatherstocking suffered a sea-change, — with a harpoon instead of a rifle, and a pea-jacket instead of a hunting-shirt. In both the same primitive elements may be discerned : the same limited intellectual range combined with professional or technical skill ; the same generous affections and unerring moral instincts ; the same religious feeling, taking the form at times of fatalism or superstition. Long Tom's love of the sea is like Leatherstocking's love of the woods ; the former's dislike of the land is like the latter's dislike of the clearings. Cooper himself, as we are told by his daughter, was less satisfied, in his last years, with Long Tom Coffin than most of his readers, — and of the two characters, considered that of Boltrope the better piece of workmanship. We cannot assent to this comparative estimate ; but we admit that Boltrope has not had full justice done to him in popular judgment. It is but a slight sketch, but it is extremely well done, his death is a bit of manly and genuine pathos ; and in his conversations with the chaplain there is here and there a touch of true humor, which we value the more because humor was certainly not one of the author's best gifts.

If Paul Jones is criticized, it is not for the reasons indicated by Cooper's daughter :

We are so constantly told of his calmness and abstraction, of

(22) Cf. *Pages and Pictures*, p. 77.

(23) Cf. pp. 58-60 and 63 (general article).

his sudden starts and bursts of feeling, of his low voice, of his fits of musing, that the aggregate impression is that of affectation and self-consciousness, rather than of a simple, passionate, and heroic nature. Mr. Gray does not seem to us at all like the rash, fiery, and dare-devil Scotchman of history. His conduct and conversation, as recounted in the fifth chapter of the novel, are unnatural and improbable ; and we cannot wonder that the first lieutenant did not know what to make of so melodramatic and sententious a gentleman, in the guise of a pilot.

It should be added, however, that the pilot's steering of the frigate through the shoals and reefs is chosen as a sample of Cooper's talent at its best :

The technical skill, the poetical feeling, the rapidity of the narrative, the distinctness of the details, the vividness of the coloring, the life, power, and animation which breathe and burn in every line, make up a combination of the highest order of literary merit. It is as good a sea piece as the best of Turner's ; and we cannot give it higher praise. We hear the whistling of the wind through the rigging and the roar of the pitiless sea bellowing for its prey ; we see the white caps of the waves flashing with spectral light through the darkness, and the gallant ship whirled along like a bubble by the irresistible current ; we hold our breath as we read of the expedients and manœuvres which most of us but half understand, and heave a long sigh of relief when the danger is past, and the ship reaches the open sea.

Ten years later *Appleton's Journal* (24) speaks very highly of the same passage, as well as of the novel in general :

The *Pilot*, also published in 1823, was the first of Cooper's sea-tales ; and it placed him almost immediately among the leaders in this field of authorship, then almost as original, in the way he treated it, as that upon which he had entered in the *Pioneers*. In this sea-story are some of the strongest features in his works ; the scene in its first chapters where the vessel beats out of the « Devil's Grip », is one that has few equals in fiction.

(24) Cf. May 18, 1872, p. 551 (general article).

After a lapse of ten more years, LOUNSBURY (25) points out Cooper's own partiality for this scene, and endorses it with unequivocal enthusiasm :

Moreover, to try the effect upon the more peculiar public of seamen, he read an extract to one of his old shipmates who was also a relative. This was the account of the war-vessel working off shore in a gale. The selection was certainly a happy one. The literature of the sea presents no more thrilling chapter than that which, describing the passage of the great frigate through the narrow channel, gives every detail with such vividness and power that the most unimaginative cannot merely see ship, shore, and foaming water, but almost hear the roaring of the wind, the creaking of the cordage, and the dashing of the waves against the breakers.

With regard to the originality and the durable fame of the novel as a whole, Lounsbury's opinion is also very flattering :

The Pilot is indeed not only the first of Cooper's sea-stories in point of time, but if we regard exclusively the excellence of detached scenes, it may perhaps be justly styled the best of them all. At any rate its place in the highest rank of this species of fiction cannot be disputed, and in spite of the multitude of similar works that have followed in its wake and which have had their seasons of temporary popularity, its hold upon the public has never been lost.

Cooper is further praised for having « displayed great judgment in the selection of his hero », and for his use of technical terms, based on « a full artistic appreciation of the impressiveness of the unknown ».

In 1896 another academical critic, BRANDER MATTHEWS, deals with the Pilot in two different works. In his *Introduction to the Leatherstocking Tales* (26) he insists on the originality of Cooper's first novel of the sea :

(25) Cf. pp. 46-48.

(26) Cf. *The Deerslayer*. (Crowell and Co). New York and Boston, 1896, p. XXI.

The Pilot... was the first real sea-story. Smollett had written novels in which sailors figured and in which certain of the scenes were laid on board ship, but he had not attempted a tale the whole interest of which centered in the sea itself. Scott, in *The Pirate*, had made use of the sailor, but from a landsman's point of view.

In the *Introduction to the Study of American Literature* (27) the *Pilot* is considered in greater detail. The fact that the part played by Paul Jones reminds Brander Matthews of the mysterious errands and hairbreadth escapes of Harvey Birch is particularly interesting :

Pilot, the first salt-water novel ever written, and to this day one of the very best. Its nameless and mysterious hero was a marine Harvey Birch ; obviously he had been modeled upon the Paul Jones whose name is held in terror to this day on the British coasts he harassed. In *Long Tom Coffin*, the Nantucket whaler, Cooper created the only one of his characters worthy to take place beside Leather-stocking, and Tom, like Natty, is simple, homely, and strong. In writing the « *Pilot* », Cooper evidently had in mind the friends who thought it impossible to interest the general reader in a tale of the ocean, and he laid some of his scenes on land ; but it is these very passages which are tedious to-day, while the scenes at sea keep their freshness and have still unfailing interest.

Three years later W. L. Cross devotes a flattering paragraph to the *Pilot* in his history of the *Development of the English Novel* (28). His way of expressing the difference between Cooper and Smollett is original, for, instead of emphasizing Smollett's coarseness, it points out that Cooper was not, perhaps, realistic enough in his description of seamen :

His aim was to show just how a ship is managed in combat and in storm off a dangerous coast ; and that he did in scenes as thrilling as those in his Indian romances. The one great character of the story is the coxswain Long Tom Coffin, who was born on the sea, and cared for no land except a little mud-flat on which to

(27) Cf. p. 64.

(28) Cf. p. 156.

grow vegetables. All the brutality and coarseness of seamen Cooper kept well in the background. In distinction from « Roderick Random », « The Pilot » is the romance of the ocean.

The following year BARRETT WENDELL strongly criticizes both the plot and the characters — Long Tom excepted — but he has nothing but praise for the marine element in the novel :

The Pilot is very uneven. The plot is conventionally trivial ; and most of the characters are more so still. But Long Tom Coffin is a living Yankee sailor, and when we come to the sea, with its endless variety of weather, and to the sea-fights, such as that between the « Ariel » and the « Alacrity », it is hardly excessive to say that there is little better in print. If the plot and the characters had been half so good as the wonderful marine background in which they are set, the book would have been a masterpiece. (29).

In December 1901 the *Outlook* remarks that the Pilot « remains probably the best sea story yet written by an American » — a very high compliment indeed when one remembers the classics of the sea penned by Dana and Melville.

The *Reader Magazine* for Christmas 1904, though recognizing the originality and power of the Pilot, does not venture to go so far :

The Pilot was as much of an experiment as *The Spy* ; for the real romance of the sea had not been attempted, although the coarsely realistic stories of Smollett had indeed introduced the theme into English fiction... The success of *The Pilot* was almost as brilliant as that of *The Spy*. For the first time a genuine sea novel had been written ; and, in spite of some obvious defects, *The Pilot* remains to this day one of the best novels of its class. (30).

In 1906 L. H. VINCENT (31) praises the naval scenes, but dismisses them quickly :

(29) Cf. *A Literary History of America*, p. 185.

(30) Cf. pp. 128-29 (general article)

(31) Cf. *American Literary Masters*, pp. 82-83.

The new note is in the vivid descriptive passages, couched in terms of practical seamanship, but so graphically put that the most ignorant of lubbers can be depended on to read with a quickened pulse. Notable among these are the rescue of the frigate from the shoals, and the fight between the « Alacrity » and « Ariel ».

The characters, on the other hand, are commented upon at some length and, on the whole, in a very favourable manner — the heroines not excepted :

There is much human nature in the speech of the men if not of the women. The dialogue between Borroughcliffe and Manual would not shame books more celebrated for humor than *The Pilot*. Vast refreshment can be found in the racy and picturesque talk of Long Tom Coffin, the most original character in Cooper's gallery of seamen ; also in that of Boltrope, who from an early « prejudice » against knee-breeches (he somehow always imagined Satan as wearing them) never became fully reconciled to the ship's chaplain until that worthy left off « scudding under bare poles » and garbed himself like other men. Dillon, the lawyer, is too obviously the scoundrel. As the « Cacique of Pedee », however, he serves a good end. His kinsman, Colonel Howard, walks the stage with dignity, a worthy specimen of the loyalist of the American Revolution, and typical of the class for whom Cooper had much sympathy.

The young women are far from being lay figures. They have beauty, intelligence, courage, even audacity. That they are too perfect in feature, form, manner, was a defect common to all fiction of the time ; the art of making a heroine of a plain woman was in its infancy. Cooper, who could describe a girl, had always a deal of trouble to make her talk. Did he never listen to the conversation of those interesting creatures known, in the parlance of his day, as « females » ? Would Alice Dunscombe, meeting her lover after a separation of six years, have used the phrases Cooper put into her lips ? All these young women might with justice have complained that the speaking parts assigned them were not representative. But they were at the author's mercy and did as they were told.

Cooper's principal biographer, to whom we are all vastly indebted, says that « the female characters of his earlier novels

are never able to do anything successfully but faint ». This is unfair. Katherine Plowden, a brunette beauty, whom Professor Lounsbury has allowed himself to forget, goes habited *en garçon* to seek her lover, and does not faint when she finds him, only laughs like the gay Rosalind she is.

In the *Atlantic Monthly* for September 1907 (32), BRANDER MATTHEWS undertakes to show — by sketching the history of the naval element in literature — that « the Pilot was a most daring experiment in fiction. » After mentioning Homer, Virgil, Defoe, Smollett, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Walter Scott, Brander Matthews concludes :

Here at last was the real thing, a story of the ocean, of vessels manœuvring, of sailors as they are, — the work of a sailor who was also a teller of tales, a creator of character, a poet. Here was the formula to be handed down to those who might come after, to Melville and to Marryat, — good story-tellers, both of them, but lacking in Cooper's double experience as a sailor before the mast in a merchant vessel, and as an officer on the quarterdeck of a man-of-war. The very novelty of the *Pilot*, its originality, seemed to the author's friends dangerous, and they discouraged him. Perhaps this is the reason why the story is a little slow in getting under way, and why the author sometimes tacks more than once before coming to close quarters. There are a few scenes on land, far less interesting than those at sea. But how veracious and convincing is the character of Long Tom Coffin. How vigorous and how humorous is the pinning of the British officer to the mast by Long Tom's harpoon ! How superb is the account of the ship working off-shore in a gale ! It is no wonder that the French naval historian, Admiral Jurien de la Gravière, declared that « he could never read it without his pulse thrilling again with the joy of seamanship. »

Three years later, JOHN ERSKINE's elaborate criticism of the Pilot is remarkably original, if not always thoroughly convincing (33). His justification of the often criticized land scenes cannot but strike the unprejudiced reader :

(32) Cf. pp. 336-37 (general article).

(33) Cf. pp. 70-74. There is in particular an unfortunate confusion between Long Tom and Boltrope with regard to Tom's family ties.

By laying the plot of his sea story near land Cooper has an additional advantage in the resulting complication of the incidents. The excitement of the storms and the fights would hardly sustain the interest through a whole novel, and the best episodes of *The Pilot* are occasioned by the movements on land. The treachery of Dillon leads to practically all the adventures except the first escape of the frigate from the shoals ; he sends the expresses by land which bring the gunshot from the fort, fatally maiming the *Ariel*, and which summon the English fleet for the last battle with the frigate ; and his recapture by Long Tom, under the very eyes of the Abbey guard, is not the least sensational adventure of the story.

The comments upon Paul Jones might have done much to alleviate the dissatisfaction which Cooper is said to have felt, in consequence of having idealized the character of the hero :

The character that gives the book its title differs strongly from any Cooper had yet drawn, though it is repeated with variations in his later sea tales. Paul Jones, as Cooper imagines him, is no such idealization of romance as Leatherstocking, nor such a hero as he is in popular memory. Cooper represents him as an adventurer, whose remarkable ability for the time was used for the cause of liberty, but whose motives were not altogether noble ; vanity weighs with him more than patriotism, of which indeed he has none, since he owns no country, and he would serve a flattering tyrant as quickly as he would the Continental Congress. It is surprising that Cooper can make so much of a hero he has so little sympathy for ; in the comments of Barnstable, and in the meetings of Paul Jones and Alice Duncombe, it is perfectly evident that the Scotch fighter did not meet the author's measure of a great man... What saves him to the sympathy of the reader is the efficiency he does show in moments of extreme peril, and the private romance that dignifies and excuses his foibles by its unmistakable note of tragedy.

Long Tom is, as usual, compared to Leatherstocking and Harvey Birch, but John Erskine also takes pains to show how he differs from them :

The contrast to the pilot is found in Long Tom Coffin, the

only character in Cooper's work that can be ranked near Leatherstocking or Harvey Birch. He is the creature of the same aspects of Cooper's genius, showing the same qualities of truthfulness, picturesqueness and self-reliance. The Spy's pack and the hunter's rifle, the labels of their individuality, are matched by Long Tom's harpoon and his cannon, and he is localized to the imagination in the Ariel as the other heroes are fixed in the landscape. For all that, Long Tom differs from both Harvey Birch and Leatherstocking. He represents no tragic sacrifice, like the first, nor any of the pathos of advancing civilization, like the second. Strongly individualized, he yet suggests a class, as Birch and Leatherstocking do not. He is proud of his Nantucket ancestry and of his Nantucket comrades, and is careful himself to say that their skill is greater than his. The mention of the old mother for whom he provides a comfortable home (sic) gives him a place at once in normal society. Cooper represents in him the highly developed resourcefulness and the equally marked idiosyncrasy to be found in a crude society, — and, for the same reasons, in the American navy during the Revolution. It is evident, however, that Long Tom would be out of place on the frigate ; he belongs with the little schooner, on which discipline is apparently superseded by the efficiency of individuals, and his death in the wreck is most fitting. He is no wizard of the sea, like the mysterious pilot ; his force is from his character, — his simplicity and his loyalty. By these two qualities he is ennobled to a poetic degree, chivalrous in his rough way to womanhood, and terrible to his foes. He alone in the story belongs entirely to the sea. He therefore satisfies the imagination more than Paul Jones and is more clearly remembered ; he is the true hero of the book.

With regard to the sea passages, John Erskine is inclined, as in the case of the *Pioneers*, to overlook the poetical quality of Cooper's descriptions and to insist on their realism. It will also be noted that he compliments Cooper on those scenes of horror which had shocked several of the earlier critics of the Pilot :

The nautical realism of *The Pilot* has been practically unquestioned... But the story has great realistic force in directions that the untechnical landsman can appreciate. A genuine atmosphere

of physical danger is sustained at a higher pitch, with fewer moments of relief, than elsewhere in Cooper, who is the master of such effect. Yet the climaxes of terror are both adequate and in good taste. The abject cowardice of Dillon, and his death, are matched as mental pictures by the physical horror of the English captain's fate, harpooned to the mast. The good taste which restrains these portrayals, by a master-touch of art left Long Tom's last moments entirely to the imagination.

In October 1916, R. W. NEESER, secretary of the Naval Society, New York City, read a paper on *Cooper's sea tales* at the 18th Annual meeting of the New York State Historical Association, held at Cooperstown. Unfortunately Mr. Neeser's comments upon the Pilot are somewhat disappointing. He is content to repeat, almost word for word, Lounsbury's fine passage on the escape of the frigate, and his only original remark is that « Long Tom Coffing (sic) and his « Long Tom » did wonderfully good shooting for his day and generation (34) ».

The *Nation* for February 16, 1921, calls Long Tom « the first memorable sailor in American fiction and to this day almost the best » (35). In the same year CARL VAN DOREN (36) lays stress upon the significance of Long Tom for the interpretation of Cooper's work :

The central personage is a democratic hero, Long Tom Coffin, of Nantucket, who lives and dies by the sea which has made him, as love of country made Natty Bumppo. Long Tom is as real as an oak ; he is also as romantic as storms and tides. Thus at the outset of his career Cooper made clear his conviction — one of the most important of all the convictions which lie back of his work — that character is shaped by occupation. Aristocratic though he might be in his own prejudices, he understood the rich diversities which may be brought into fiction by the representation of men drawn from different callings, which, more than different ages or landscapes, produce differences among men.

(34) Cf. *Proceedings of the 18th Annual Meeting of the New York State Historical Association*. October 1916. Cooperstown, p. 64.

(35) Cf. p. 255.

(36) Cf. *The American Novel*, pp. 31-32.

Paul Jones is dismissed as a conventional Byronic hero, but the originality of the novel as a whole is defined in glowing terms :

Not only did he outdo Scott in sheer accuracy, but he created a new literary type, the tale of adventure on the sea, in which, though he was to have many followers in almost every modern language, he has not been seriously surpassed for vigor and swift rush of narrative. Smollett had already discovered the racy humors of seamen, but it remained for Cooper to capture for fiction the mystery and beauty, the shock and thrill of the sea. Experts say that his technical knowledge was sound ; which is more important, he wrote, in *The Pilot*, a story about sailing vessels which convinces landmen even in days of steam.

Finally, in the *Ladies' Home Journal* for January 1923 (37), W. LYON PHELPS, a professed lover of sea novels, not only claims that « the Pilot founded a newschool in fiction », but expresses his « gratitude to James Fenimore Cooper for proving that the sea could be made « interesting ».

(37) Cf. pp. 115-16.

England

The *Pilot* was republished in England even more rapidly than the *Pioneers*, so that it was reviewed in several English periodicals at the end of January and the beginning of February 1824.

The *Museum* analyses it at length in two successive numbers. On January 31, the reviewer deals with the novel as a whole, adding a few remarks about some of the characters (1). His general comments are very favourable, but it is a matter of regret that he does not push his comparison between Cooper and Smollett far enough, thus failing to discover that the American is not a mere disciple of the great Scotsman :

The work, though blending history and fiction together is drawn with so vivid a pen, as to approach nearer the former than the latter ; and if not equal to the works of the author of *Waverley* in beauty of delineation, it is scarcely inferior in point of interest to the best of that favourite author's productions. There appears to be a freshness in Mr. Cooper's writing which we seldom meet with (nor can scarcely expect) in the present day, when the fields of literature rarely present an uncultivated spot. We do not compare Mr. Cooper with our favourite Smollett ; but it is no mean praise to say, that in many points he approaches nearer to that powerful writer than any author of the day. Like Smollett, his forte lies in sketching the stronger passions of our nature, and especially those which predominate in the character of seamen. His writings exhibit far more invention, than accuracy or judgment in filling up ; he is consequently not so successful as Mr. Washington Irving in beauty of style, or purity of diction. But he

(1) Cf. pp. 61-62.

is at the same time exempt from the coarseness of some of his countrymen.

With regard to the characters, it should be noted that the portrait of Cecilia Howard is deemed worthy of being quoted at length. Cooper is praised, besides, for having « very judiciously divided the interest pretty fairly among the three ladies, instead of following the common plan of allowing one character to eclipse all the rest. »

But, of course, Long Tom comes in for the largest share of praise :

Among the nautical characters which are sketched with great vigour, Tom Coffin, an old cockswain of the schooner, is decidedly the best. This character is a « Tom Pipes » a little amplified, and shows the strong points of the author.

The second part of the article (2), on February 7, lays stress on the merit of the naval scenes, which are said to be the more remarkable as they are exempt from any disparaging comments upon England and her navy :

There is a powerfully written chapter or two, describing the approach of a line-of-battle ship and two frigates bearing down on the American frigate, in which the courage and nautical manœuvres of the Americans in withstanding or evading their more powerful enemies, as occasions require, are given with a degree of warmth more congenial to the meridian of New York than that of London. This, however, cannot be considered a blemish in a work of this description, with a reader, as long as the author keeps within the limits of urbanity ; and we have not noticed any of those coarse and offensive allusions to the parent state in Mr. Cooper's volumes, which too frequently disgrace the writings of his contemporaries.

The plot, however, is censured for its « want of relief from nautical affairs », and the winding up of the story is found unsatisfactory, so far as the mysterious pilot is concerned :

(2) Cf. pp. 84-86.

...the hero of the tale, after having rendered such devoted services to the cause of independence, quits the American frigate in the North sea in a small boat, and his fate remains unknown to his late companions, until some years after their safe arrival in America ; the event of his death being announced in an English newspaper.

To conclude the reviewer declares that he « cannot help considering the Pilot as the work of a very powerful pen ; and calculated to increase both the reputation of the author, and that of the literature of his country ».

The *Literary Gazette* for January 31 contains but a short notice of the new novel :

The Pilot, an American Novel, by the author of The Spy, Pioneers, etc., has appeared too late in the week for our Review. We have glanced over it, however, and form a favourable opinion of its merits. Like Smollett, the writer appears to have made much use of his own experience and adventures in a seafaring life ; and we think his narrative founded thereon, though rather saturated with nauticals, will do credit to *this* class of literature in America, inasmuch as the Drama noticed in our last was calculated to bring *that* class into contempt. (3)

Its next issue, on February 7, offers, however, a regular review of the Pilot (4). Having finished his perusal of the work the critic declares he has found in it : « with a good deal to censure, much to praise » ; and we gather from what follows that the chief faults he objects to are three in number.

To begin with, the story is « altogether improbable » ; then the character of the Pilot « belongs too much to the line of extravagance so common to this type of composition » ; he is « an idealized Paul Jones, who slinks about commanding ships of war where he is unknown, quelling daring spirits by his eye, subduing battles by his voice, and making winds and waves obedient to his extraordinary powers. Finally, the author's

(3) Cf. p. 77. The drama alluded to is *A Tale of Lexington* by S. B. H. JUDAH.

(4) Cf. pp. 82-84.

patriotism has carried him beyond the bounds of verisimilitude: « It was to be expected from an American writer that all the Americans who figure on his page should be heroes ; and so they are in *The Tale of the Sea* accordingly, from the commander of a frigate to the meanest marine, from Long Tom Coffin, the boatswain, (about seven feet high), to Andrew Merry, or Merry Andrew the Middy, (about half that height, but equally every inch a hero). »

On the other hand, the reviewer seems to consider that the author's forte lies in the description of character :

..most of the characters are admirably drawn — drawn we will venture to say, from realities in life, and not imagined by the limner..

The great merit of the Novel, however, lies in the group of sea characters which its action displays..

Long Tom is the lower-class hero of the piece, and not unworthy the pen of Smollett..

Boltrope, the master, is another cleverly drawn portrait.

Oddly enough, the famous naval scenes are not commented upon. The wreck of the *Ariel* is not quoted in order to make room for the jokes cracked by the American seamen as they return to the coast ; and when the naval combat between the *Ariel* and the *Alacrity* is partly quoted, it is introduced as follows :

In the second volume he has treated his countrymen with an imaginary sea-fight off the British shore, in which the *Ariel* captures the *Alacrity* cutter, a vessel of equal force. As this is a striking compensation for the actual loss of the *Chesapeake* under similar circumstances, we copy its prominent traits for the benefit of both nations.

The conclusion, notwithstanding, is flattering enough :

In defiance of probability and of many blemishes, there is so much force and originality in these volumes, that we dare say they will float for some time on the tide of public favour before they sink into Davy's Locker.

Towards the end of the month, Scott advises Miss Edgeworth to read the *Pilot* « as soon as possible » because « the novel is a very clever one, and the sea scenes and characters in particular are admirably drawn » (5).

Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine* for March (6), in a comparatively short notice, has the merit of attempting to differentiate Cooper from Smollett :

The *Pilot*.. is a fine sea-piece, painted with a bold and vigorous pencil, and does great credit to the writer's powers, both of description and sentiment. Although he has chosen the same element for the subject of his sketches which has furnished Smollett with so many happy delineations, yet there is nothing of the copyist in Mr. Cooper's pages. The sea-pieces of Smollett are mostly, if not entirely, humorous ; but the scenes of « The *Pilot* » are of a more chivalrous and romantic character. The novel is, however, by no means deficient in that broad comic humour which seems to flow so easily from a seaman's tongue.

The comments upon the characters are necessarily somewhat sketchy, but none the less quite favourable — except for the excessive *Byronism* of Paul Jones :

The *Pilot* himself, is, in our estimation, the least successful character in the novel, and, indeed, the only one with whom we feel inclined to find fault. There is too much *Byronism* about him, if we may be allowed the expression. The other characters are all well-drawn, spirited, distinct, and natural. Tom Coffin, or Long Tom, might have figured with great credit to himself and the author on the pages of the Scotch novelist.

Finally the critic finds room to express his admiration for some at least of the many striking scenes in the novel :

Many of the scenes are admirably conceived ; amongst which we would specify the taking of St Ruth's Abbey, the escape of Long Tom, and the loss of the *Ariel*. The latter scene, more espe-

(5) Cf. LOCKHART, chap. 60. Letter dated February 24, 1824.

(6) Cf. p. 123-24.

cially, is worked up with a degree of energy which takes a powerful effect upon the feelings of the reader.

At the same date the *Monthly Review Enlarged* approves of the portrait of Paul Jones and of the author's character-drawing in general :

The main object of the work is to display the character of that celebrated marauder, which is drawn and supported with skill ; while the mystery which involves his identity is well-sustained throughout, his name not being disclosed even when his death is related. The other characters are also ably delineated, and spiritedly maintained.

With regard to the naval element in the story, the critic declares that it does satisfy a seaman like himself, but questions its success with the general public :

... though a love-episode is introduced, the whole is such a decided naval picture consisting of so much actual nautical operation and manœuvre, that we apprehend it will not be acceptable to the generality of novel-readers. For ourselves, however, though the writer defies the critics as mere *lubbers*, we can assure him that we have perused it with professional relish, and hail him as a thorough *seaman* ; but we must add that if the manners and discipline of his officers be correctly represented as American, they are not such as prevail in the British navy.

The conclusion takes into account the political implications of the *Pilot* : « The work deserves the same commendation which we gave to *Seventy-Six*, with the same drawback as tending to perpetuate feelings of national animosity. »

The *Ladies' Monthly Museum* for the same month again (8) compares Cooper with Smollett, but, although it finds in the *Pilot* « the stamp of original genius », it cannot help warning its fair readers that it contains a certain amount of coarseness,

(7) Cf. March 1824, p. 330.

(8) Cf. pp. 158-59. This review of the *Pilot* has been placed by CAIRNS (p. 117) among the criticisms of the *Spy*.

which is to be ascribed, not only to the manners of seamen in general but to the state of society in America :

This novel abounds in incident, and contains many rich delineations of nautical character and manners. The author, like Smollett, enjoyed the advantage, as an observer, of having served in the navy, his portraits therefore, are drawn from life, and are consequently calculated to gratify readers whose taste is not too fastidious. In almost all the productions of American intellect, which it has fallen to our lot to examine, there has been a certain coarseness both of sentiment and expression, indicative of the general state of society in the country in which they originate. This forms the principal drawback on the merit of these volumes ; which though not equal to the fascinating narratives of Mr. Washington Irving, will not suffer from a comparison with those of his coadjutor, the author of *Koningsmarke*.

At the same time, however, another fashionable periodical, *La Belle Assemblée* (9), does not complain of any coarseness in the short notice it devotes to the *Pilot* :

Mr. Cooper, the American wizard — why should not the Americans have a wizard as well as the English ? — has produced another very spirited novel, under the title of « *The Pilot, a Tale of the Sea* ». Abounding with improbability, it exhibits some powerful sketches of character, with some rich traits of dry and comic humour, principally of a nautical stamp..

There is much freshness and originality — much also of nationality — about these volumes ; and we do not wonder at the avidity with which they are sought for in the United States. They are well deserving of perusal, even in England.

Besides, it should not be forgotten that Miss MITFORD's often quoted and enthusiastic letter of March 5 on the *Pilot* dwells on the superiority of Cooper over Smollett, owing especially to the lack of coarseness in his naval pictures :

Pray have you read the American novels ? I mean the series by Mr. Cooper — « the Spy », &c. If you have not, send for them,

(9) Cf. pp. 123-24,

and let me hear the result. In my mind they are as good as anything Sir Walter Scott ever wrote. He has opened fresh ground, too (if we may say so of the sea). No one but Smollett has ever attempted to delineate the naval character ; and then he is so coarse and hard. Now this has the same truth and power, with a deep, grand feeling. I must not overpraise it, for fear of producing the reaction, which such injudicious enthusiasm is calculated to induce ; but I must request you to read it. Only read it. Imagine the author's boldness in taking Paul Jones for a hero, and his power in making one care for him. I envy the Americans their Mr. Cooper. Tell me how you like « The Pilot ». There is a certain Long Tom who appears to me the finest thing since Parson Adams (10).

The Universal Review for May 1824 also compares Cooper with Smollett, but considers the former as a mere disciple of the latter. Its ironical comments upon the American characters in the Pilot indicate that Cooper's patriotism is not particularly relished :

Mr. Cooper, an American, who has been engaged in the sea service, is the author of these novels and they are among the best productions of the kind, which that new land has sent forth to redeem its literature from the stain of mediocrity. Several of the scenes are well wrought ; and some of the characters ably drawn. The hero is Paul Jones, the famous pirate. The other personages are all Columbian heroes in their way, and kill, burn, sink, and destroy every British man or thing opposed to them. Smollett is evidently the author's prototype, and we may give him the highest praise he could hope for, when we say that in some instances, he approaches his model. Whenever he lands, however, he is out of his element and puts together just such improbabilities as would have pleased the readers of fiction fifty years ago (11).

The Lady's Magazine for August 1824 reproduces verbatim

(10) Letter to Sir William Elford. Cf. *Miss Mitford's Life* by A. L. L'ESTRANGE. Vol. 2, p. 77.

(11) Cf. p. 382.

the favourable notice which had appeared in *Colburn's* in March. (12).

In the October number of *Blackwood's* (13), JOHN NEAL grudgingly recognizes the merit of his fellow countryman's last novel :

Pilot. — have never read it properly : style greatly improved — some passages quite beyond Cooper — beyond our hopes of him we mean.

At about the same time the *Edinburgh Scotsman* (14), which heartily rejoices in the progress of America, « the abode and conservatory » of Liberty, does not hesitate to proclaim Cooper's superiority over Smollett himself :

Smollett had been at sea, but Cooper is, body and spirit, a sailor, the ocean is truly his element — the deck his home. He confers reality on all his descriptions... Every movement — from that of the tacking of the frigate to the launching of the whaleboat, is visible to our eyes, and we actually take part in the proceedings and conversations of the crew...

The descriptions of the vessels — of their various manœuvres — of the sunrise in the German Ocean — of, we might say, every sea scene in the novel, is excellent ; but the piloting of the frigate through the breakers and shoals at midnight — the wrecking of the *Ariel*, the fierce sea fights, and above all, perhaps, the last hours of the gun captain and cockswain, Long Tom, and the death of the sailing-master, Boltrope — are given with a truth and force and generate such a breathless interest, that De Foe himself is, in some respects, thrown at a distance by our author...

The reviewer is no less enthusiastic in his praise of the naval characters :

The characters, generally speaking, are admirably brought out. Those of Long Tom and Boltrope are unrivalled. Barnstable,

(12) Cf. p. 445.

(13) Cf. p. 428.

(14) The article was reprinted in the *New York Mirror* for December 4, 1824, p. 151.

in his attachment to the Ariel, and her crew in particular, is also excellent ; and in Griffiths (sic), and perhaps still more in the mysterious Pilot, Paul Jones, the author displays great skill and power...

Cooper is also given credit for his sense of fairness, even when patriotic questions are involved :

The bravery and skill of England.. are not underrated to fortune and their sense of the cause in which they are engaged.

The conclusion of such an article is, of course, highly flattering, but it is curiously tinged by the critic's political leanings :

There is indeed, genuine talent throughout and although a fastidious taste may find some things to carp at, the reader who cannot relish these volumes, is either the slave of authority, or wants the qualities which enable others to appreciate what, under the impulse of genius, is perceived by an unsophisticated head, and poured out from an open, manly and generous heart.

About a year later, a dramatized version of the Pilot met with an immense and lasting success in London, at the Adelphi Theatre. (15) This success, no doubt, was due to the fact that BALL, the dramatist, had coolly reversed the action, transferred the scene to the American coast, and changed Long Tom Coffin into an old English sea dog, wonderfully personified by T. P. Cooke. Nevertheless, a certain share of the popularity of the play could not but be ascribed to the author of the original novel, as is shown by the following comments in the introduction to the first volume of Cumberland's *Minor Theatre* : (16)

This dramatic piece is taken from the well-known tale of the Pilot, written by Mr. Cooper, and here we gladly seize the opportunity of speaking favourably of at least *one* transatlantic author ; for we should as soon think of giving America credit

(15) Cf. *Theatrical Observer*, Nov. 1, and 25, 1825, and Nov. 17, 1828.

(16) *Cumberland's Minor Theatre, with Remarks, Biographical and Critical* by D. G. LONDON (no date) Vol. I (The Pilot is given the place of honor in this volume).

for the paintings of West, as for the writings of Washington Irving ; whose education, studies, feelings, associations, and very style, are purely *English*. The tale possesses considerable spirit, energy, and boldness of character and colouring, that mark an original genius. It is somewhat overlaid with description, always labouring to produce strong effects ; and as such is well calculated for theatric (sic) exhibition... Mr. Cooke gave a new feature to the sailor's character. It was that of thoughtfulness and mystery — of deep toned passion and romance. Tom, on the high and giddy mast, had beheld the ocean with a meditating eye ; *he adored* it as his element, and reposed on its billows... Mr. Cooke embodied the utmost conception of the author, and more.

In March 1826 Colburn's publication of the *Naval Sketch Book* ; or *Service Afloat and Ashore by an Officer of Rank* (17), calls forth a most important nautical article in *Blackwood's* (18). The critic, who is not ashamed to proclaim himself a « land-lubber », is confident enough in his knowledge of naval matters to find fault with Southey's *Life of Nelson* and Campbell's *Mariners of England*, and to « take a slap » at Allen Cunningham's romance, *Paul Jones*. But he does not conceal his great admiration of Cooper — for whom he has almost nothing but words of praise — while he notices that Smollett deals rather with the crew than with the vessel, and that he unfortunately writes in a bitter spirit :

Cooper the American novelist, a man of unquestionable genius, and himself a naval officer (whether like our author an officer of rank, we know not), has given us some spirited, even splendid, pictures of naval life. His individual characters are all somewhat exaggerated, which is a great pity, for they are well conceived and contrasted but his descriptions of all sorts of manœuvres, in all sorts of weather, and at all hours of day and night, are at once truly nautical, and truly poetical. We never were more interested in our lives than in his account of the escape (after a running fight) of the American frigate and sloop from one

(17) Captain GLASCOCK.

(18) Cf. pp. 353-74.

of his Majesty's squadrons. The bearing down of a ninety-four-gun ship, through a stormy and clouded night, is magnificent. Cooper exults, as he ought to do, in the glory of the American Stars ; yet he is not unjust to the character of our navy, and there is nothing about him of the braggadocio. He has doubtless been both in battle and in wreck, and is a man that would despise a cork-jacket. We hope he has not a wooden leg — but if he has, may he dot and go on for half a century. He seems a man worthy of having sailed with Decatur.

In June of the same year, the *Monthly Review Enlarged* (19) is quite as enthusiastic in its praise of the *Pilot* as a novel of the sea.

Being originally bred to the sea, he served as a midshipman in the American navy ; and this early pursuit of a profession of danger has ministered to the strength of his vigorous imagination. His *Pilot* is unquestionably the best romance of nautical adventure which our times have produced ; and there is one scene in that tale — a sea-fight — which, if he had never written another line, would alone distinguish him for a master of powerful description.

A month later, the *British Critic* (20) deals rather with the characters than with the nautical scenes. It praises Cooper's portrait of the loyalist colonel, « the poor veteran, to whose honourable and loyal character our republican author does full justice », and devotes much space to the analysis of the unsatisfactory character of Paul Jones and of the masterly picture of Long Tom Coffin :

Mr. Cooper is as ashamed as the American admiralty most likely were, of having been tempted to make use of a fellow who had not the national attachment evinced even by Dick Hatteraick, in his lurking wish for « a lust-haus and blumgarten by the Middleburg canal » : a sort of sea-skinner without that pretence of fighting for his country, which covered the misdeeds of the skinners of 1776. Accordingly he gives Paul a mistress of a rank

(19) Cf. p. 123 (in a review of the *Mohicans*).

(20) Cf. July 1826, pp. 482-34 (*American Novels*).

to which he could not have aspired, for the purpose of putting into her mouth an eloquent reprobation of his treason. It is as we conceived, from the same feeling, that the character of the hardy partisan becomes rather a failure in Mr. Cooper's hands... his speeches have more the air of a Jeremiade from the lips of young Watson, or Henry Hunt at Ilchester, than of the rough concise language which probably marked the quondam smuggler. Though competently enforced by stamps and frowns, they smell more of the frowzy leathern apron of a bilious boot-closer, expounding the « Times » or « Chronicle » over mudley porter, than of the tarry trousers of a thorough-bred son of the sea.

We turn with pleasure to a character of the last-mentioned sort, in which Mr. Cooper has had complete success, probably from entering into it with undivided satisfaction. We mean that of Long Tom Coffin, the cockswain of Lieutenant Barnstable...

We have seen a head executed by a Mr. Hurlstone, an American artist, who bids fair to share the reputation of Newton and Leslie, which he called a study from one of Paul Jones's crew ; a contemplative weather-beaten countenance, marked by the subdued recollections of battles and hard gales, which exactly conveys to us the notion of poor Tom.

In February 1827 the *Newcastle Magazine* (21), going a step further than *Blackwood's* had gone one year before, proclaims Cooper's superiority over Smollett. It likewise places the *Pilot* quite above the preceding works of its author :

The *Pilot* is a greater proof of genius than either the *Spy* or the *Pioneers*. The author professes to be inferior to Smollett. But Smollett's *Roderick Random* is not by any means so pure and exclusive, so professional and yet so polished a sea work as the *Pilot*. Indeed the latter is just as superior to Smollett, as the navy of the present day, all over the world, is superior in skill and politeness, and almost every thing than can be named to the navy of George the 2d. It is as much superior in genius to the former works of the author, as it is more free from mere local and national association and attachment — as it is a book, the characters of which are not drawn from a few individuals or accurate likenesses bearing the marks of industry rather than of creation

but characters brought from the great store-house of nature, and which stand forth from the canvas with all the life and power of portraits, the most minute traits of which had been transferred from the breathing models with all their roundness and living lineaments as they stood.

Such is the critic's admiration for the Pilot that he really thinks it entitles Cooper to be placed at least on the same level as Scott himself :

The author of Waverley seems to require the historical or traditionary outline of his picture — he does not seem at home till he finds every thing ready for the coloring. We confess we had the same opinion of Mr. Cooper. His former novels had their foundation in the wars and early settlements of his country and though we admired the ability of the painter, we did not give him credit for originating much of his pictures he so highly finished. But here is a proof of genius indeed. Here is a novel in which everyone can see how little, how very little, the author owes to tradition or to history, or even to personal adventure. To the last he may owe the dry details and the technical knowledge of seamanship, but out of these he has built an edifice which not only proudly stands by the side of our Waverley novels, but almost beards them for precedence.

Cooper's gift of making every ordinary reader a seaman for the time being is commented upon with genuine enthusiasm:

With most of the sea novels we have read, one feels an almost constant wish to be on shore again. But here the life of seamen, the spirit of the naval character, and even the dangers they encounter, are so vividly brought before us — the last indeed, with such an animated sense of daring and of merit in the daring, that every reader is a seaman from the beginning of the book to the end, and at the last he longs for another volume, he desires most fervently to be « once more upon the waters — yet once more ».

Finally the characters of Long Tom, of Colonel Howard and of his villainous nephew Dillon, are duly praised, while that

of Paul Jones is admired to an extent which is rather surprising in an Englishman (22) :

The Pilot himself is the celebrated Paul Jones, of one of whose most celebrated exploits on this coast we some time ago published a circumstantial account by a valued correspondent. — The name is not once mentioned in the novel, but the character is so striking ; the placid intrepidity, the collected powers, ever ready without ostentation to achieve the most stupendous undertakings ; the mingled gloom and politeness, command and gentleness, confidence and humility of the man, are such as to win our respect, our love, and our admiration.

In July 1827, an article on Chateaubriand and Cooper, in Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine* (23), contains a very flattering reference to the originality of the Pilot :

His « Pilot » is truly a Tale of the Sea ; — « native and endued into that element ». He makes us hear all the sounds of the water, from the gentlest ripple to the roar of the tempest ; become conversant with all weathers and all signs of the deep ; and discriminate every change of light cast on the waves. Compared to him our poets are fresh-water sailors, who know nothing of the matter ; he alone gives us the plain but mighty truth.

After the appearance of the *Red Rover*, in December 1827, more or less detailed comparisons between the two sea novels by Cooper are, of course, frequent enough. For instance, on December 8, the *New London Literary Gazette* (24) does not think the *Red Rover* equal to the *Pilot*, while the *Literary Gazette* (25) pronounces it superior to its predecessor. On August 29, 1829 the *Edinburgh Literary Journal* (4) is more

(22) It will be remembered that the *Newcastle Magazine* was also particularly broad-minded in its review of the *Pioneers* (January 1824). This review was praised in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* for February 28, 1824, as the *Newcastle Magazine* gladly informs its readers at the beginning of its article on the *Pilot*.

(23) Cf. p. 80.

(24) Cf. p. 417.

(25) Cf. p. 787.

(26) Cf. p. 172.

elaborate, but, while recognizing the high merits of the *Pilot*, it awards the palm to the *Red Rover* which it considers moreover the best of Cooper's novels :

The *Red Rover* is a second and more successful attempt at what the author probably intended in the *Pilot*. In this latter novel, the events are so crowded as to hurt each other's effects, and are managed as by the hand of a beginner. The first conception is good, but there is generally a want of fulness and finish. The principal characters, too, strike us as failures — in particular, the ladies. And we may as well take this opportunity of remarking, that we do not think Cooper at any time especially successful as a limner of the fair sex. We must, however, qualify our blame by admitting, that even in the *Pilot* there are indications of that talent which is displayed in its maturity in the *Red Rover*. The character of the hero — the redoubted Paul Jones — is powerfully, and we think, truly given. Long Tom Coffin is a jewel inadequately represented even by T. P. Cooke ; and the running fight between the American frigate and the English vessels has scarcely been surpassed by the author's happiest efforts.

In October of the same year, the *Edinburgh Review* (27) is just as positive that the *Pilot* is Cooper's masterpiece, and does not even mention his other works in the two capital pages it devotes to an analysis of Cooper's talent.

In 1830 the *Conversations of James Northcote* (28) make public an earlier tribute of *Hazlitt's* to the powers displayed in the *Pilot* :

Hazlitt — « I asked if he had seen the American novels, in one of which (the *Pilot*) there was an excellent description of an American privateer expecting the approach of an English man-of-war in a thick fog, when some one saw what appeared to be a bright cloud rising over the fog, but it proved to be the topsail of a seventy-four. Northcote thought this was striking, but he had not seen the book. « Was it one of I-'s ? [Irving] » Oh, no, he is a mere trifler — a *fillegree* man — an English

(27) Cf. article VIII : *Sermons and Tracts*, pp. 128-29.

(28) Cf. *Conversation the ninth*, pp. 132-133,

littérateur at second-hand ; but the *Pilot* gave a true and unvarnished picture of American character and manners. The storm, the fight, the whole account of the ship's crew, and in particular of an old boatswain, were done to the life — every thing

Suffered a sea change
Into something new and strange.

On land he did not do so well. The fault of American literature (when not a mere vapid imitation of ours) was, that it ran too much into dry, minute, literal description, or if it made an effort to rise above this ground of matter-of-fact, it was forced and exaggerated, « horrors accumulating on horror's head »... Cooper's novels and Brown's romances (something on the model of Godwin's) were the two extremes.

In May 1830, the reviewer of Captain Marryatt's *King's Own* (29), in the *Monthly Magazine* (30), attempts to injure Cooper's reputation as a sea novelist by claiming that he is no true seaman, having only been « a purser ». It is to be noted, however, that he cannot find fault with the seamanship of the *Pilot*, so that he is compelled to imagine that Cooper wrote it with a thorough sea dog at his elbow :

Until the last few years « tales of the sea » have, strange to say, been furnished by landmen. Smollett, one of the most conspicuous in the employment of naval incidents in fiction, was a physician : it is true he had been a naval surgeon ; but still he was a civilian, and therefore must have been unacquainted with the subtler points of nautical minutiae. Dibdin, the *soi-disant* hard of the ocean, was scarcely ever out of the smoke of London ; Moore, the author of a whimsical and humorous romance called the « Post-Captain » (31) was a doctor, we do not recollect whether of physic or of law ; and Cooper, the American writer of « Tales of the Sea », is or was a purser. Now, pursers are very respectable men and Cooper is a fine writer ; but as to intimate and

(29) *The King's Own* was Marryatt's second novel. The first, *Frank Mildmay*, was published in 1829, the same year as Michael Scott's *Tom Cringle's Log* and more than a year after the *Red Rover*.

(30) Cf. p. 562.

(31) The real author was JOHN DAVIS. See our main thesis, pp. 457-59.

scientific knowledge of seamanship, we hold Cooper to be often at fault ; and we ascribe this, not to his want of faculty, but to the amphibious nature of his office : he is neither fish nor flesh. In this appreciation of his calling, we shall be joined by every one who has had, we were going to say, the *good luck* of passing a month on board a man-of-war ; during which time the visitor must have observed that pursers were, perhaps unfairly, often made the joke and by-word of the service. In the censure implied in what we have just said, we would unequivocally except the masterly tale of the « Pilot », in the construction of which we cannot help suspecting that Cooper must have had at his elbow some one of those naval adepts whose knowledge of his profession has contributed to give a tone to the maritime character of America. One of Mr. Cooper's tales is dedicated to a friend and former mess-mate — a *Master*. We repeat, that we do not by this mean to undervalue the works of Cooper, who possesses merit enough for the foundation of his claims independently of his naval romances, which in nautical details are according to the old-lady style of expression, « *no better than they should be* ».

In October the *Spirit of Literature* (32) bears witness to the lasting popularity of the Pilot in spite of its unsatisfactory plot. It also undertakes to defend the novel against the « absurd criticism of the Edinburgh », but the reviewer only succeeds in showing that he has but a dim recollection of the criticism he objects to.

The « Pilot », is, we think, even more popular than the « Spy » ; yet the story is bad here, and the excellences are precisely the same as in the « Pioneers » — one well-done character. Long Tom Coffin, and some very well-done scenes. The criticism lately given on this novel in the « Edinburgh Review » is absurd. The writer says there is nothing good in it till we come to the appearance of the English frigate through the haze in chase of the American vessels — that is to say, till we come within fifty pages of the end. The description of the ships off a lee-shore, and of the shipwreck of the Little Ariel, are not to be criticised down so easily.

(32) Cf. p. 426. (In a review of the *Water Witch*.)

The following year, the *Pilot* has the honour to head the list of Colburn's new collection of *Standard Novels* and to receive once more a degree of notice in the literary periodicals.

Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine* (33), in a remarkably well-timed article on Cooper, unites in its praise the *Pilot* and the *Red Rover* but singles out Long Tom Coffin as a piece of masterly characterization :

The Red Rover and *The Pilot* have become, perhaps, still more popular, and are unquestionably not less peculiar in character, than some of those that we have named. As ocean-tales, they are full of startling effects and strange surprises; and they are scarcely less valuable, we think as pictures of life and manners. Long Tom Coffin can hardly be an invention — a seaman of the mind — an imaginary mariner. No, he is a thorough-bred seaking, preferring the other side of the Atlantic to this, and the ocean to either; he is the noblest of nauticals — an American Admiral of low degree.

The *Atlas* for March 20 only mentions the republication of the *Pilot* (34), but the *Tatler* for April 7 contains a regular review of the novel (35). The critic, however, is not over warm in his commendation of the sea scenes :

To have the « *Pilot* » in one pleasant, thick readable volume, price six shillings, is a good thing ; and to have « *Caleb Williams* », is a better. We do not know how much the word *Standard* applies to the first novel, because it has not yet had time to stand for that period which is understood to confer the appellation. But we believe that the originality and truth of its sea-painting will enable it to do so. We know enough of the sea, and of the dangers of it, to take more than an ordinary interest in the most celebrated passage of this novel : and we have read few things that have left upon us a more lasting impression.

On the other hand, the defects of Cooper's « domestic paint-

(33) Cf. April 1831, pp. 360-61.

(34) Cf. p. 188.

(35) Cf. p. 737.

ing » and of his female characters are dwelt upon at some length :

We do not like the author's domestic painting so well, though always very clever, and often something higher, with the exception of his minuteness in painting costume, the common error of the followers of Sir Walter Scott, among whom Mr. COOPER undoubtedly ranks the first, with a merit of his own, arising from the same local novelty. Sir Walter's details of costume are warranted, not only by his masterly mode of treating even those, but by the remoteness and peculiarity of the times and persons with whom they are connected. We cannot feel so much interest in the skirt of a modern coat, or the way in which a gentleman avoids sitting down upon it, even though the gentleman be Washington. Mr. Cooper's women are proper cold cousins of Sir Walter's, with the melancholy advantage of impressing you as bearing greater resemblances to the understood character of American ladies, than Sir Walter's do, to our preconceptions of the bonnie countrywomen of Burns and Ramsay. They seem like women in glass cases ; and seldom show themselves alive, but when they are taking upon themselves to rate and lecture their admirers. At least this was the impression made upon us by the perusal of several of Mr. Cooper's novels, when they first came out ; the present one, if we mistake not, in particular. We admire and love the American institutions ; we look upon the people of the United States as our fellow-countrymen... but at present we regard their national reputation as too much modified by the commercial and sea-faring condition of their nonage : and without meaning any disrespect to Mr. Cooper, himself a naval officer, we cannot help thinking that there is a certain want of refinement and liberal knowledge, arising out of the extremes of commercial timidity and marine license, in making women so strait laced and precise, and afraid of committing themselves, as they appear in these novels.

The tone of the *Monthly Review* for May (36) is decidedly colder :

We are certainly no admirers of the « Pilot », and we

(36) Cf. pp. 145-46.

candidly confess that we have made many attempts to read it ; but never could succeed. We know others who have been placed in a similar predicament. But still the « voice of fame » has lauded this work to the skies ; and though we cannot admit that, in this instance at least, it has been « unerring », it has convinced many readers that the « Pilot » is a capital novel. « Caleb Williams » has our vote and best interest. There, indeed, we are hand in hand with the publishers, to whose undertaking we wish every success.

A month later, however, the *Gentleman's Magazine* (37) welcomes the new publication with the usual favourable comments :

The talents of Cooper, particularly in his display of nautical manners, are well known. He gives to his sailors all that nobleness of character with which we in general associate our opinions of the profession; and they are always depicted, like the devils in the illuminations of the middle ages, in incessant action; and the incidents in which they are actors are generally situations which amuse, interest, or stimulate the feelings. The philosophical dignity of the *Pilot* is, we think, an embellishment of the archetype Paul-Jones, a very ambitious fellow ; but the character of Tom Coffin is inimitable.

In August of the same year, a long article on Naval Novels, in Marryatt's *Metropolitan Magazine* (38), reminds one of the highly flattering appreciation of the *Pilot*, which *Blackwood's* had published in a similar article in March 1826. This time, however, the writer appears to be a professional seaman, and his conclusions are accordingly more decided, as well as more valuable. To begin with, the critics' blind worship of Smollett is strongly disapproved of :

Smollett being the first writer (at least of novels) who attempted to delineate nautical life, critics and readers have been induced to take every thing uttered by him for gospel... Still it is not safe to rely implicitly on Smollett's representations ; for

(37) Cf. p. 609.

(38) Cf. pp. 370-76, The article is signed W. N. G.

though occasionally these are founded in a deep knowledge of the human heart, seconded by great skill in portraiture, his humour, generally speaking, is not so much that of a painter of real life as of a caricaturist ; and the propensity to add the *outré* to what is in itself extravagant, though seen here and there through all his writings, is no where more obvious than in his naval scenes. Upon his exaggeration of naval character and incident, and upon the forced and inconsistent phraseology put into the mouth of his seamen, the critic has erected his standard of excellence in this line of fiction but critics are, for the most part, « Gentlemen of England who live at home », though *not* at ease. (We are sorry to vitiate the quotation).

Besides, Smollett has never written a regular sea novel, and his descriptions of storms and battles are not what they should be :

Smollett's sea scenes are only incidental to his stories ; they do not constitute the staple of *Roderick Random* ; and the locality of *Peregrine Pickle*, though some of the principal characters are seamen, is altogether on shore... he seems incompetent to delineate with minuteness and fidelity the grand aspect of nature on the deep. He endeavours indeed frequently to do this ; but his descriptions resemble more the style of a log-book than that of a man whose imagination had been excited by the sublime influences of the sea scenes. His « tempests » and « battles » are not exhibited for the grandeur inherent in themselves but are made subservient to a display of incidents—connected with his own individual profession ; for example, what he terms the hurricane in *Roderick Random*, is briefly despatched in order that « Poor Jack Rattlin », who had fallen from the main yard-arm, at the expense of a broken leg, should be brought below to the surgeon for an operation.

After Smollett, the author of the *Post Captain* is dismissed as not being a thorough seaman :

We believe that, in order of time, the next naval novel of any celebrity is the *Post Captain*... it appears to be not the production of a seaman, but of a landsman or naval civilian, who had industriously picked up the most common-place portions of sea-

slang and had pressed them into the service ; for be it observed, that there is a *slang* occasionally employed by loquacious watermen, and pert blue-jackets, (for it does not follow that all fellows attired in blue jackets are seamen), which is very different from the vernacular of the fore-castle.

It follows that the author of the *Pilot* has been the first genuine sea novelist :

But not to an Englishman (though, as lord Halifax says, « he is only capable of salvation *here* by believing in the sea), is the praise due of having written the first genuine and thorough naval romance. This has been achieved by an American. Cooper's *Pilot*, though full of national prejudices, has unquestionably led the way in this species of literature.

As late as January 1832, the *Pilot* remains a favourite with the *Westminster Review* (39) :

The scenic descriptions of Mr. Cooper's tales of the sea, are superior even to those containing his woodland narratives, and, notwithstanding its glaring deficiencies when he intrudes into the drawing-room and the society of woman, we yet prefer the *Pilot* to any of his successors. Long Tom and the Ariel contribute to this partiality. No one at all conversant with sailors, but must feel how true to nature is the strong affection of the single-hearted boatswain for his vessel.

The following September, *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* recalls with unfeigned enthusiasm some of the most famous scenes in the *Pilot* (40) :

We know not in the whole range of literature so vivid and true a picture of the stormy sea and its power as in the loss of the Bristol ship in the Red Rover or one so engrossingly exciting as in the preservation of the American frigate off a lee-shore in the *Pilot*. The sea is indeed his home, and « ocean's sights and sounds familiar things ». The mistake of the top-sail of the British man-

(39) Cf. pp. 180-81. (In a review of the *Bravo*.)

(40) Cf. p. 661,

of-war for a cloud, and the sombre emerging of the hull from the mist, is one of the most overpowering instances of the moral picturesque we have yet met with.

In July 1838, the *Foreign Quarterly Review* publishes a very important article on sea novels in general (41). Like *Blackwood's* and the *Metropolitan Magazine*, it willingly acknowledges that Cooper's *Pilot* has led the way in this new department of literature :

It is singular that maritime novels should be of foreign origin, when the sea itself had been so long the favourite and boasted possession of Great Britain, and the members of the naval profession were so closely interwoven with our political existence and habits of thought as the great bulwark of national defence...

In this question the name of Smollett has been naturally brought forward as the real originator of the seafaring novel ; and Mr. Cooper has been considered as only treading, to a certain degree, in his footsteps. We cannot hold with this opinion in the least.

The subject of Smollett was, strictly speaking, less the seafaring life than sea-faring individuals. It was the manners of the man rather than the occupations of the class ; it spoke of the sailor, not of the sea. The whims and eccentricities of nautical thought and language, as called forth incidentally and by collision ; the steering of a chaise, the lee-shore of a road-post, the menage of a cockpit, or the brutality and ignorance of a commander ; all that could bring us close into intimacy with this amphibious variety of the genus *homo*, was traced by the pen of genius before our eyes, and mingled with our subsequent recollections by inimitable powers of comic extravagance and frolicsome humour. Humour too that at times led of necessity to pathos, for humour itself is but the irony of affection. That this result, of pathos, occurs more seldom in Smollett than might have been imagined from the depth and richness of his humorous vein, is no argument against the consequence we have drawn; and may be easily accounted for by the circumstances of his life and habits, and the thence induced cynicism of his character..

But if individual incident and portrait were thus sketched or

(41) The actual title is: *French Naval Romances*.

worked out with singular power, the phenomena of nature, the dangers of the deep, and the triumphs of human skill and resolution, — all that form the real staple of the seaman's existence, were totally beyond the province of Smollett. Still less was he calculated for attempting to depict those yearnings of the heart that arise in the loneliness of dignity that invests the state-cabin and the quarter-deck; in the solitude and isolation of the night-watch, and in that stronger solitude of the heart itself, which feels in the long intervals of forced repose that those around, though united for a time in the same vessel, have no one point or capacity of sympathy with its private ties, and that it cannot, like the landsman's, seek out these when most desirable...

Some five years later, the *Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review*, (42) in a general article on Cooper's work, is full of admiration for the « gallery of marine pictures » in the *Pilot*, but the plot and characters — Long Tom not excepted — are pronounced unsatisfactory :

The *Pilot* raised his fame to its culminating point. The Americans were enchanted at the furious nationality of this tale, in which a mercenary trader in rebellion (to call Paul Jones by no severer name), was invested with the dignity of a patriot hero, and the dark sublimity of a Childe or Corsair of the Byronic school. The English accepted the characters and the invention with good-tempered indifference, for the sake of a gallery of marine pictures, the like of which only exists in the works of Vandervelde. The steerage of the *Ariel* through the shoals, the wreck of the schooner, the apparition of the sails of the gigantic man-of-war above the fog, were detailed with a clearness and animation so rare and riveting, as to make awkwardness in the management of incident overlooked, and utter inefficiency in portrait-painting accepted as faithful delineation — For we do not imagine that any novel-reader now looks upon Long Tom Coffin as one of the genuine sailor-brood. His terms may be of the sea : but in his nature he essentially differs little from Mr. Cooper's favourite forest heroes.

In 1850 THOMAS POWELL, in his *Living Authors of America*,

(42) Cf. October 1843. p. 474.

(43) objects to the exaggerated patriotism of the Pilot, and, oddly enough, ascribes to it the comparatively insignificant part which Paul Jones is made to play in the novel :

In « the Pilot » we observe the nationality of the author in an undue predominance...

...There is a needless obscurity in the character of Paul Jones, from whom the novel derives its name ; it seems to us that any man conversant with the coasting trade would have done, and that a fine character has been brought to do porter's work... Paul Jones, the bold-brave Admiral, ought, we consider, not to have been introduced by the author, if he could find nothing better for him to do than to conduct the ship out of soundings. Probably this artistic error arose from that same overweening national prejudice, which is so great a defect in Mr. Cooper's novels. Had he done justice to the capabilities and career of Paul Jones, he would of necessity have overshadowed the American actors, and consequently the hero would have been a Scotchman. A great author should never suffer the smaller to control the greater, and, in a work of art, truth should reign, and not prejudice.

Long Tom is admired, but here again the critic's comments are rather unexpected :

The character of Long Tom Coffin, admirable as it is, seems more English than American; it is founded more on Dibdin's Songs than the transatlantic Sailor. This was turned to good account by some English playwright when the novel first appeared ; for he reversed the action, and making Tom Coffin an English Seaman, and Boroughcliffe an American Volunteer, coolly transferred the scene of action to the shores of the New World. With this slight alteration, the British public highly enjoyed the Drama.

We well remember one night when Cooke as Long Tom, and Reeve as Boroughcliffe, were convulsing the audience, that some Americans gave vent to their indignation, and loudly protested against Reeve's outrageous caricature; after a few involuntary ebullitions their patriotism cooled, and they endured the rest with praiseworthy and smiling composure.

(43) Cf. pp. 25-27.

We shall not enter into the improbabilities of the plot, but endeavor to illustrate Mr. Cooper's genius by bringing before the reader the scene where the old sailor perishes suicidally in the vessel. It is so powerfully drawn — so vividly brought before us — that we do not stop to inquire how far it is correct in point of character. The great difference between a passion and a monomania lies in the pursuit of the object, and the overvaluing of it. In one sense every passion may be termed a monomania, but, though the line of demarcation varies in different individuals it is, nevertheless, very plainly defined.

A monomania is a passion carried to an unnatural extent. Love is natural but when this passion for an object carries us beyond reason it becomes a monomania. Judged by this rule, Long Tom Coffin is a monomaniac, for no rational being would destroy himself because a favorite ship was sinking. Still with even this serious drawback, the genius of a fine writer is visible throughout the following extract.

In justice to Powell's criticism, another statement of his should be added :

There are so many stirring scenes in this novel that it carries the reader through without much effort ; but, after the excitement of the first perusal is over, we cannot help noticing the serious defects that stare us in the face.

Shortly after Cooper's death, on October 4, 1851, the *Athenæum* (44) quotes Scott's flattering appreciation of the *Pilot* — in his letter to Miss Edgeworth — and goes on to say :

In this novel Cooper, like Smollett, has drawn largely and happily on his own experiences of a seaman's life : — and Sir Walter Scott might with justice have been yet more lavish in his terms of admiration. There are in it passages of description which as mere description are all but unrivalled in their kind, — and which hold the imagination breathless under the excitement of their interest as only the works of genius can.

The following year the *Eclectic Review* (45) speaks of the Pilot in almost the same terms :

Sir Walter Scott's critique, though favorable, is somewhat cold when we consider the actual merit of the work. He brought all his own experience of a seaman's life to bear on his narrative; and in his descriptions, has succeeded in creating some that are, as pieces of descriptive writing, perhaps unequalled in any other novel. The breathless interest he awakens, the strong hold he contrives to take of the imagination, is an evidence of his consummate genius and skill.

In January 1856, Cooper's pre-eminent rank among all the sea novelists of England and America is fully recognized by the *Dublin University Magazine* (46). And it should be borne in mind that the writer of the article gives himself as a real seaman, acquainted moreover with practically all the works of nautical fiction written in English. For this critic, the Pilot stands with the *Red Rover* at the head of Cooper's sea tales, while « The two finest and most elaborate portraits in the entire Cooper seagallery are Long Tom Coffin in the *Pilot*, and Dick Fid in the *Red Rover*. In their way, they both are perfect, and quite Shakespearian. They never yet have been equalled in naval fiction, nor... ever will be surpassed. »

Two months later the same magazine (47) in « a searching parallel between the greatest American and the greatest English sea-novelist » — i. e. Cooper and Marryatt — again praises Long Tom and Dick Fid as « original characters so marvellously true to nature that they seem living beings present to our corporeal vision », while Cooper's superiority over all his rivals is even more strikingly described :

Such were Marryat and Cooper. If the former was the *King* of the naval novelists of Great Britain, Cooper was the *EMPEROR* of the naval novelists of *all* countries ; and, there is this enormous

(45) Quoted in the *Eclectic Magazine* for June 1852, p. 209.

(46) Cf. *A Trio of American Sailor-Authors*, p. 48.

(47) Cf. p. 177. Reprinted in *Littell's Living Age*, vol. 116, pp. 676-89, and the *Eclectic Magazine*, vol. 17 new series, pp. 464-78.

difference between the King and the Emperor — the former was an estimable writer of versatile talent, and the latter a glorious prose-poet of the very loftiest genius. The gulf between the two is, and ever will be, impassable.

We have done.

W. H.

Some twenty years later, another most elaborate article on *Sea Novels* appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* for February 1873. Its author, JAMES HANNAY — who had just died after correcting the proofs — ranked Cooper somewhat below Marryatt, « the Lord High Admiral... of all marine story-tellers. » He was none the less a great admirer of Cooper's talent, which he found at its best in such works as the *Pilot*.

The *Pilot* may be taken as a worthy sample of the maritime fiction of Cooper. « Long Tom Coffin » is a creation quite distinct from those of our side of the Atlantic, for Cooper anticipated Hawthorne in seeking inspiration among native scenes, and treated his countrymen to home-brewed...

Long Tom Coffin is the most marked character in the *Pilot* — perhaps, in all Cooper's books of the class... The pilot himself — Gray — Paul Jones passing *incognito* — has a kind of theatrical gloom about him which smells of the stage lamp. The English gentlemen and gentlewomen want naturalness, which is hardly wonderful, but where Fenimore Cooper is strongest, here as elsewhere, is in his description of marine scenery — seascape painting, if there be such a term. In the best of these, the ships seem to live, like the human beings on board them. You see the white foam froth on the storm-tossed slate-coloured water. You hold your breath while the Yankee frigate is weathering the Devil's Grip on the Northumberland coast. This poetic power breathes through all Fenimore Cooper's tales...

Valuable as such an appreciation may be, it fails to impress one like the moving tribute which CONRAD himself so willingly paid to both Marryatt and Cooper. Conrad refused to choose between those two men of another race who had shaped his

life through the distances of space and time (48). He preferred to point out their great respective merits, and, in so doing, he did not forget to give Cooper credit for his most famous marine creation, « Long Tom Coffin, a monumental seaman with the individuality of life and the significance of a type ! » (49)

(48) Cf. *Tales of the Sea*. Richard Clay and Sons. London 1919, p. 10 : « Through the distances of space and time those two men of another race have shaped also the life of the writer of this appreciation ».

(49) Conrad also praises Manual and Borroughcliffe : « It is hard to believe that Manual and Borroughcliffe... shall pass away some day and be utterly forgotten ».

France

Thanks to Defauconpret's industry, French readers were able to peruse the *Pilot* only three months after its publication in the English speaking countries (1). Simultaneously, several reviews of the new novel appeared in various literary periodicals.

The *Revue Encyclopédique* for April 1824 (2) is much impressed by the novelty of the scenes and characters, but it does not seem to relish them particularly, and does not take the trouble to ascertain whether the *Pilot* had any precursors in literature. The author, however, is praised for his skill in overcoming the difficulties presented by his subject, and hailed as a promising rival of Walter Scott :

Ce roman d'un genre particulier, a pour objet, comme son titre l'annonce, d'offrir des scènes qui appartiennent à l'Océan, et de tracer quelques traits caractéristiques d'une classe d'hommes, qui, par sa situation habituelle, se trouvant séparée de la société ordinaire, est généralement peu connue..

On y trouve la description de quelques ouragans et d'une horrible tempête, une scène de naufrage, plusieurs combats sur mer ; puis, des conversations de marins et de militaires qui offrent un singulier mélange de bravoure, de générosité, d'humeur brusque et parfois grossière ; de crédulité superstitieuse et d'orgueilleuse insouciance au milieu des dangers ; d'ardeur pour les entreprises hasardeuses et de mépris de la mort ; enfin, des incidens peu variés, et, pour ainsi dire, concentrés sur le même point, mais dont l'intérêt, habilement soutenu, excite la curiosité et attache

(1) Cf. *Announcement in the Bibliographie de la France*, for April 10, 1824.

(2) Cf. pp. 207-09. The article is signed M.-A. J.

l'attention du lecteur. On peut dire, à la louange de M. Cooper, que, grâce à lui, sa patrie n'aura pas longtemps à envier aux îles britanniques leur célèbre Walter Scott, dont il reproduit souvent la manière pittoresque et la féconde imagination.

The marine element is more to the taste of the *Quotidienne* (3), which also expresses its approbation of the mysterious hero of the book :

Les principales scènes de cet ouvrage se passent sur mer, chaque personnage a une physionomie originale, depuis le capitaine du bâtiment, jusqu'au contre maître. Le pilote lui-même est un de ces héros mystérieux dont nos romanciers modernes ont tiré souvent un très heureux parti. Le pilote n'est autre que le fameux Paul Jones qui a joué un rôle si brillant dans la lutte de l'indépendance américaine. Cette composition remarquable offre des tableaux de mœurs d'une vérité frappante, et un épisode historique rempli d'intérêt.

A more elaborate, and still more flattering review, is to be found in the *Annales de la Littérature et des Arts* (4). After declaring that the Pilot has exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the admirers of Scott's disciple and rival, the critic repeatedly points out the excellence of Cooper's plot :

Il n'était pas facile d'établir des relations entre ces couples amoureux. Un romancier moins habile que M. Cooper aurait renoncé à une pareille entreprise, ou plutôt s'en serait fort mal tiré. L'auteur du *Pilote* semble se jouer de cette difficulté..

Un aperçu aussi succinct est loin de pouvoir donner une idée du talent de M. Cooper ; mais du moins il fait connoître toutes les difficultés d'un semblable sujet ; et, nous nous plaisons à le répéter, le romancier américain les a surmontées avec un rare bonheur. Toujours naturel, toujours original, il dispose les événements, ramène les personnages sur la scène, multiplie les traits de caractère avec un talent digne de l'auteur d'*Ivanhoë*.

All the characters successively receive their share of praise. Long Tom Coffin, however, is not exalted above the rest :

(3) Cf. April 12, 1824, p. 4.

(4) Cf. 1824, tome 16, p. 420-24. The review is signed ERNEST DE BLXXX.

Tous les détails sont parfaitement soignés, et plusieurs individus, qui ne paroissent que sur le second plan, sont aussi bien caractérisés que les principaux personnages. Dès les premiers chapitres, on a reconnu dans Paul Jones cette énergie et cette présence d'esprit d'un être supérieur qui se connoît lui-même ; dans le Colonel Howard, l'inflexibilité des principes de l'homme d'honneur avec quelques préjugés de la vieillesse ; dans Barnstable et dans Griffith, l'enthousiasme de leur âge modifié par deux caractères habilement contrastés, comme ceux de leurs jeunes maîtresses. Le midshipman Merry a toute l'insouciance d'un marin de seize ans. L'hypocrisie de Richard Dillon et l'exaltation d'Alix Dunscombe, maîtresse de Paul Jones, concourent également à l'extrême variété que M. Cooper a su répandre dans son roman...

Le capitaine Burroughcliffe, commandant des toupes anglaises... le vieux Munson, capitaine de la frégate; dont la mort est racontée en peu de mots, avec une simplicité effrayante ; le capitaine Manuel, qui commande les troupes de marine, le quartier-maître Boltrope et le matelot Tom Coffin le long sont tous peints à grands traits.

The naval scenes, though duly admired, are not dwelt upon at great length, but the reviewer confidently predicts that the *Pilot* will become a favourite among the officers of the French navy :

La rivalité des soldats de marine et des matelots, la supériorité que les uns et les autres s'arrogent sur les troupes de terre, toutes les habitudes des marins sont mises en jeu avec l'adresse la plus remarquable. Les périls de la navigation et les détails d'un combat naval ne sont pas représentés avec moins de vérité...

M. Cooper a choisi pour épigraphe ces vers singuliers :

Ecoutez-moi vous tous qui n'êtes pas marins.

Sans aucun doute les auditeurs qu'il paroît désirer répondront à son appel, et ne s'en repentiront pas, mais la lecture du *Pilote* n'aura pas moins de charme pour nos officiers de marine. Ils y verront une peinture fidèle de leur vie aventureuse ; et ce roman, plus vrai que bien des écrits historiques, deviendra leur compagnon de voyage inséparable.

In January 1825, a reviewer of Irving's *Tales of a Traveller*,

in the *Revue Encyclopédique* (5), recalls « l'admirable talent avec lequel M. Cooper a su intéresser pendant quatre volumes, à la vie de vaisseau, aux scènes changeantes de la mer, et jusqu'aux descriptions des moindres manœuvres », thus atoning for the earlier lukewarm comments of M. A. J. in the same periodical.

The *Globe* for March 12, 1825, shows its knowledge of foreign literature by comparing Cooper with Smollett (6). It rightly suggests that Long Tom is not, perhaps, a replica of Smollett's sailors, but fails to push the comparison any further. Its remarks, especially the last sentence, are, at any rate, highly flattering :

Le *Pilote* est venu en 1824 accroître la renommée de M. Cooper. Cet ouvrage, dont la scène est presque continuellement sur mer, semble un double défi porté à l'Angleterre. On croirait volontiers que l'auteur, en bon citoyen, a voulu établir que cet océan que les Anglais prétendent avec orgueil faire partie de leurs domaines appartient à parts égales au pavillon américain, et, sous le rapport littéraire, c'est une réponse victorieuse faite à Sir Walter Scott, qui avait déclaré dans la *Vie de Smollett* qu'il était désormais impossible de peindre les marins sans copier l'auteur de Roderick Random. Les marins de Cooper égalent ceux de Smollett ; mais peut-être Smollett n'a inventé aucun caractère comparable à *Tom le long*. Le *Pilote* est un tableau digne à la fois de Joseph Vernet et de Walter Scott.

Another article in the *Globe* for July 2, 1827, offers as it were a revised and improved version of the above comments (7). Again the publication of the *Pilot* is construed into an attempt to wrest from England the Empire of the sea, but the critic (F.A.S.) remarks that the *Pioneers* already contained a marine character of no mean value :

On trouve répandu dans ces volumes, avec un rare bonheur, cette sorte d'*humour* marine qui, dans le roman des *Pionniers*

(5) Cf. p. 213. The article is signed C. N.

(6) Cf. p. 395. (General article signed E. T.).

(7) Cf. p. 205. (General article signed F. A. S.).

donne un air si original au personnage de *Ben-la-Pompe*. L'auteur, dans le récit d'une expédition audacieusement jetée sur les côtes mornes de l'Ile Britannique, semble avoir voulu, au nom de sa nation, prendre une sorte de possession littéraire d'un élément dont l'Angleterre osa longtemps réclamer le monopole.

The difference between Long Tom and Smollett's sailors is no longer hinted at, but analysed :

Parmi plusieurs personnages habilement contrastés, et une foule de marins peints avec une grande finesse de nuances, nous distinguerons surtout *Tom-le-long*. Ce caractère, bien autrement original que tous les marins de Smollett (*sic*), nous semble un vrai chef d'œuvre. Cette sorte d'honnêteté et de sensibilité rudes que M. Cooper excelle à peindre, ce singulier amour pour la mer sa patrie, cette entière identification avec son *schooner* chéri, font de *Tom-le-long* un tout extrêmement attachant.

With greater insight than his predecessor, F.A.S. realizes that much of Cooper's originality lies in the fact that he endows his ships with life, and transforms them into actual characters

Il y a une magie étonnante dans l'intérêt répandu par l'auteur sur les deux bâtiments qui sont pour lui comme deux de ses principaux personnages, dans cette sorte de vie, d'existence individuelle, de personnification qu'il leur prête ; et l'on conçoit, après cette lecture, l'idée d'animation attachée en anglais par le genre féminin à tout nom de navire.

F.A.S. further notices that the part played by Paul Jones recalls that of Washington in the *Spy* :

Le Pilote est encore un caractère mystérieux, présidant, sans s'y mêler souvent, aux événements du drame. La figure de ce personnage, en qui chacun a reconnu le célèbre *Paul Jones*, est moins pure mais peut-être plus vigoureusement tracée que celle de Washington. Rien de plus simple, puisqu'il joue un rôle principal.

Another interesting remark is that the numerous death-scenes described in the *Pilot* are « astonishingly varied ».

In November of the same year a third critic of the *Revue Encyclopédique* (8), B.J., goes a step further than his predecessors in asserting Cooper's originality :

...la gaiété, la brusquerie, la promptitude, et en même temps le courage et la bonhomie des marins, et surtout l'originalité de leurs expressions, lui donnent [au Pilote] un caractère très-remarquable, et qu'il serait sans doute impossible de retrouver dans aucun autre.

But the most striking of the early French tributes to Cooper's originality did not come from professional critics. EUGÈNE SUE, the first of French marine novelists, repeatedly acknowledged his indebtedness to Cooper. In his preface to *Plik et Plok*, dated January 15, 1831, he praises the novelty of Cooper's marine novels, and dwells on the great loss they sustain in the process of their translation into French :

Avant Cooper, il y aurait peut-être eu de l'audace à tenter d'intéresser le public français à des habitudes, à des caractères qui n'éveillent en lui aucune sympathie. Inexpert des mœurs maritimes, il lui est vraiment impossible d'apprécier la vérité des tableaux qu'on déroulerait à ses yeux...

Cooper dans ses admirables romans, a peint cet homme [le marin] d'une manière aussi large que pittoresque. Il a vivement excité la curiosité, l'intérêt pour des mœurs dont les détails contrastent rudement avec ceux de notre vie citadine. Mais malheureusement l'énergie, la finesse de l'original, s'effacent presque toujours dans la traduction. En français, ce style est dépouillé de sa nerveuse concision. Nous admirons bien encore les grands traits qui distinguent ce talent vraiment neuf ; mais les nuances, les couleurs locales, la précieuse naïveté des idiomes, échappent à ceux qui ne peuvent pas lire en anglais ces pages merveilleuses...

Four months later, in a letter to Cooper which constitutes the preface to *Atar Gull*, Eugène Sue addresses his correspondent in the following memorable terms :

(8) Cf. p. 351. (General article signed B. J.).

...vous monsieur, qui avez créé le *roman maritime* d'une manière si originale et si puissante, et qui partagez avec Goëthe et Scott le rare et précieux privilège d'être un des *types* de la littérature étrangère contemporaine.

For all that, Eugène Sue — like the other French naval novelists — did not consider it advisable to sail exactly in the wake of the great American forerunner. That was a mistake, if we are to believe JOEL CHERBULIEZ, the editor of the *Revue Critique des Livres Nouveaux*, who, in April 1838, contrasts the *Pilot* with the French works that followed it :

On se rappelle les charmantes et originales peintures du *Pilote* de Cooper, le premier et le meilleur des romans maritimes. Les sanglantes orgies des forbans de MM. E. Sue, Corbière, etc., etc., produisent à côté de ce modèle un contraste bien rouge et bien dégoûtant. Dans cette vie tout exceptionnelle du marin dont l'auteur américain avait si bien esquissé les principaux traits, ces messieurs n'ont trouvé qu'un arsenal d'émotions violentes, de passions désespérées, une succession continuelle de carnages, une vraie source intarissable d'eau de vie, de sang, et de blasphèmes... Dieu merci, tout cela n'existe que dans l'imagination des romanciers (9).

In 1839, G. DE SAINT FARGEAU'S, *Revue des Romans* (10), does full justice to the naval scenes in the *Pilot*. After giving a short summary of the plot, the critic continues :

Ce cadre est, comme on le voit, assez léger ; aussi n'est-ce point principalement la partie romanesque qui est la plus intéressante. C'est dans les scènes de mer qu'on retrouve Cooper ; c'est sur un navire battu de la tempête, ou perdu dans les écueils, que son talent prend une vive et brillante allure ; c'est quand il peint le mouvement guerrier qui anime le pont à la vue d'une voile ennemie, le courage si impétueux du marin sous la main de fer de la discipline, et son insouciance gaieté après l'orage ; c'est surtout quand il nous montre dans un naufrage ce vieux contre-maître, attaché d'amour au schooner dont il a vu clouer la première

(9) Cf. pp. 124-27.

(10) Cf. p. 227.

planche, fidèle à son ami, quand la dernière va manquer sous ses pieds, et se laissant engoutir par les flots à la vue du rivage où ses compagnons se sont tous sauvés.

It is to be deplored that the rest of Saint Fargeau's article, i.e. his comments upon the conversations of sailors and soldiers, and upon the difficulties arising from the subject itself, should have been taken bodily from the *Revue Encyclopédique* for April 1824 (11).

The following year BALZAC, at the beginning of his famous review of the *Pathfinder* (12), includes the Pilot among the seven novels which constitute Cooper's sole claims to lasting fame, the others being : the four Leatherstocking Tales then published, the *Red Rover* and the *Spy*.

Further on, Balzac's appreciation of the character of Long Tom may be inferred from the following passage :

Walter Scott a mille faces. Cooper est un peintre de marine et de paysages, admirablement servi par deux académies, le *Sauvage* et le *Matelot*. Sa belle création de Bas-de-Cuir est une œuvre à part.

In 1841, CHARLES ROMEY praises Long Tom highly, in his introduction to *Mercédès de Castille*, but his praises are couched in such vague terms that his knowledge of the subject may well be called in question :

Vous souvient-il de Tom Coffin de *la Sorcière des Eaux* (13),

(11) *Vide supra*, pp. 246-47. « Des conversations de marins... attache l'attention du lecteur. »

(12) Cf. *Revue Parisienne* for July 25, 1840.

(13) The surprising connection established between Long Tom and the *Water Witch* may, perhaps, be explained by the poor rendering of a certain passage in Colburn's great article on Cooper — an article which Ph. Charles had freely translated in the *Revue Britannique* for January 1831.

The passage in Colburn's runs as follows :

« In *The Borderers*, which we have already referred to, the interest is skilfully sustained, though the details are a little tedious now and then. *The Red Rover* and *The Pilot* have become, perhaps, still more popular, and are unquestionably not less peculiar in character, than some of those that we have named. As ocean-tales, they are full of startling effects and strange surprises ;

de cet homme justement appelé *Roi de la mer*, pour qui la terre est froide et triste, et qui ne vit, ne respire, n'est véritablement homme que sur les flots ? Eh bien, c'est peut-être Cooper lui-même, non d'habitude, non comme il est aujourd'hui, mais comme il fut durant quelques années de sa jeunesse. N'est-ce pas que ce Tom Coffin vous a fait pendant plusieurs heures, pendant plusieurs jours peut-être, aimer ce qu'il aime et partager ses passions d'homme de mer ? C'est que c'est là en effet une admirable création, un type. Rassemblez les traits épars de tous ces hommes qui ont couru les mers par goût, par entraînement, vous aurez Tom Coffin. De celui-ci il a l'antipathie pour la terre ; de celui-ci l'infatigable amour des voyages ; de tous la passion de la mer, sa seule, sa grande passion. Tout simple et barbare qu'il soit d'ailleurs, Tom Coffin est grand, héroïque, sublime en face de la colère de l'Océan ; il se plaît dans la lutte avec les abîmes soulevés ; il s'y joue avec amour, avec bonheur, avec enthousiasme. Hors de là Tom Coffin retombe ; ce n'est plus rien. Il n'a plus comme les héros d'Homère, vingt coudées ; il redevient homme et vulgaire comme le moindre matelot de Boston ou de Rhode-Island. Pour tout dire en un mot, ce n'est plus Tom Coffin.

and they are scarcely less valuable, we think, as pictures of life and manners. Long Tom Coffin can hardly be an invention — a seaman of the mind — an imaginary mariner. No, he is a thorough-bred sea-king, preferring the other side of the Atlantic to this, and the ocean to either ; he is the noblest of nauticals — an American Admiral of low degree. *The Water Witch*, which has recently been added to the series, has several sea-scenes, not inferior to any that preceded them. It is more wild and experimental in parts, but it lacks nothing in point of freshness and energy ; and its marvellous incidents find a becomingly picturesque termination, as the Mariner of the Indian Shawl bears off the lady that loved him, and is never heard of afterwards. »

And here is now Ph. CHASLES' « free » translation :

« L'intérêt des *Borderers* est plus puissant : le *Corsaire rouge* et le *Pilote* l'emportent sur ce roman comme tableaux de la vie maritime. La *Sorcière des eaux* ne le cède pas à ces ouvrages. Tout y est pittoresque, énergique et cependant positif. Le réel y domine avec le grandiose. Voyez ce Tom Coffin, ce roi de la mer, cet homme qui ne vit pas sur terre, qui respire plus librement sur un lac, qui commence à jouir de l'existence sur la Méditerranée, et ne se trouve en possession de toutes ses facultés, de tout son bonheur, qu'en sillonnant de sa libre carène les flots immenses de l'océan. Il n'y a, pour cet homme, de victoire que celle qui dompte les flots, d'héroïsme que dans la lutte avec leur colère, de bonheur que dans cette lutte. Il est grossier, barbare, vulgaire ; mais il est grand : il représente l'énergie de l'humanité combattant avec l'énergie de la nature. » (*Revue Britannique*, Janv. 1831, p. 106).

It is to be noted that Ch. ROMÉY's introduction refers twice to the article in the *New Monthly Magazine*.

Three years later LOUIS DE LOMÉNIE (14) considers that Cooper is still unrivalled as a sea novelist, in spite of the numerous imitations of the Pilot :

Le Pilote, qui parut en 1824, est un chef-d'œuvre. Depuis Smollett, personne n'avait traité avec éclat le genre maritime. C'est Cooper qui l'a mis en vogue et en honneur, et, depuis *le Pilote*, de nombreuses imitations en Angleterre et en France sont venues témoigner de la sensation produite par cet ouvrage. Mais, parmi les imitateurs, nul n'a su allier avec tant de charme la poésie et la vérité, et voguer comme lui, avec un bonheur admirable entre le fantastique et le plat, qui sont les deux écueils du genre.

There follows a short but well-balanced appreciation of the defects and beauties of the novel :

Il y a bien dans *le Pilote*, comme en général dans toutes les productions de Cooper, quelques longueurs, quelques minutes descriptives ; son style est parfois traînant et lourd ; mais ces défauts disparaissent devant l'intérêt saisissant des détails, des caractères, des tableaux et de l'ensemble.

Finally Louis de Loménie enlarges upon Cooper's merits as a painter of character. He has nothing but praise for his naval portraits, and his admiration for Long Tom, though far from blind, is extreme. The ordinary *terra firma* characters themselves come in for their share of praise :

Paul Jones, le hardi et ambitieux corsaire, caché sous la jaquette d'un pilote, le sentimental Griffith, le pétulant Barnstable, le joyeux Merry, le sentencieux Boltrope, le soldat de marine Manuel *l'amphibie*, sont des types de marins aussi vrais que variés ; mais rien n'égale la belle création de *Tom-le-Long*, le fameux contre-maître de *l'Ariel*, le matelot par excellence, qui ne comprend pas l'utilité de la terre ferme, et qui, faisant corps avec le navire dont il a vu planter la première cheville, trouve tout naturel de mourir volontairement avec lui ; la scène où il prend et exécute cette détermination est la plus belle du roman. Cette

(14) Cf. *Galerie des Contemporains*, pp. 11-13.

figure si gauche, si grotesque, si amusante, et en même temps si noble et si dévouée, si imposante, a servi depuis de modèle à vingt portraits du même genre, mais aucun n'approche de la perfection de l'original. Il n'est pas jusqu'aux personnages terrestres et appartenant à la vie ordinaire, personnages que le pinceau de Cooper n'excelle pas toujours à rendre, qui ne soient également réussis dans *le Pilote*. Le vieux colonel anglais Howard, si amusant dans ses transports de *loyalty* et de patriotisme, l'intrépide, facétieux et ivrogne Boroughcliffe, le lâche et perfide Christophe Dillon, la vive et malicieuse Catherine, la belle et langoureuse Cécile, composent une galerie de portraits colorés sans exagération et dessinés avec une grande finesse.

In 1851, PH. CHASLES (15) characterizes the Pilot in a short but well-penned passage which appears to be genuine :

Lisez son chef-d'œuvre, *le Pilote*, roman peu compris dont les deux héros sont la Mer et le Vaisseau ; cette œuvre, admirable d'unité et de vigueur, toute parfumée encore d'une odeur marine, imprégnée d'écume et d'eau salée, apothéose de l'homme domptant l'Océan comme un cavalier le coursier rebelle, ne pouvait être écrite que par un Anglo-Américain passionné pour l'Océan, fanatique de l'industrie humaine et de ses plus rudes triomphes.

Chasles' comments on Long Tom, however, are copied almost word for word from his free — and sometimes bungling — translation of Colburn's great article on Cooper, which had appeared in the *Revue Britannique* for January 1831 :

J'aime Tom Coffin, roi de la mer, homme qui ne vit pas sur terre, qui respire plus librement sur un lac, qui commence à jouir de l'existence sur la Méditerranée, et ne se trouve en possession de toutes ses facultés, de tout son bonheur, qu'en sillonnant de sa libre carène les flots immenses de l'Océan. Il n'y a pour cet homme de victoire que celle qui dompte les flots, d'héroïsme que dans la lutte contre leur colère, de bonheur que dans cette lutte. Grossier, barbare et vulgaire, il est grand, car il représente l'énergie de l'humanité combattant l'énergie de la nature (16).

(15) Cf. *Etudes sur les Anglo-Américains*, pp. 53 and 61.

(16) *Vide supra*, note 13.

At about the same time DUMAS the elder, in a new introduction to *Le Capitaine Paul* (first published in 1838) explains how he has been led to write a sort of sequel to the Pilot, thus paying a memorable tribute to the lasting fascination of the mysterious Mr. Gray :

Une impression généralement éprouvée par tous les admirateurs du *Pilote*, l'un des plus magnifiques romans de Cooper — impression que nous avons profondément ressentie nous-même — c'est le regret de perdre aussi complètement de vue, le livre une fois terminé, l'homme étrange que l'on a suivi avec tant d'intérêt à travers le détroit de Devils-Gripp (sic) et les corridors de l'abbaye de Sainte-Ruth. Il y a dans la physionomie, dans la parole et dans les actions de ce personnage, indiqué une première fois sous le nom de *John*, et une seconde fois sous celui de *Paul*, une mélancolie si profonde, une amertume si douloureuse, un mépris de la vie si grand, que chacun a désiré connaître les causes qui ont amené ce brave et généreux cœur au désenchantement et au doute. Quant à nous, plus d'une fois, nous l'avouons, il nous était passé par l'esprit ce désir, au moins indiscret, d'écrire à Cooper pour lui demander, sur le commencement de la carrière et la fin de la vie de cet aventureux marin, les renseignements que je cherchais en vain dans son livre. Je pensais qu'une pareille demande serait facilement excusée par celui auquel elle s'adresserait ; car elle portait avec elle la louange la plus sincère et la plus complète de son œuvre. Mais je fus retenu par l'idée que l'auteur ne connaissait peut-être, de la vie dont il nous avait donné un épisode, que la partie qui avait été éclairée par le soleil de l'indépendance américaine. En effet, le météore brillant, mais éphémère, avait passé des nuages de sa naissance à l'obscurité de sa mort, de sorte qu'il était tout à fait possible que, éloigné des lieux où son héros vit le jour et des pays où il ferma les yeux, l'historien poète, qui peut-être l'avait choisi à cause de ce mystère même, pour lui faire jouer un rôle dans ses annales, n'en eût connu que ce qu'il nous en avait transmis. Alors je me résolus à me procurer par moi-même les détails que j'avais tant désiré qu'un autre me donnât.

It is also well-known that one of the prominent sailor-authors of the later nineteenth century, Admiral JURIEŒ DE LA GRAVIÈRE, could never read the account of the frigate working

off-shore in a gale « without his pulse thrilling again with the joy of seamanship » (17).

In 1912, however, Professor J. DOUADY was far less appreciative, in his classic work, *La Mer et les Poètes Anglais* (18) :

Presque dans les mêmes parages Fenimore Cooper, le rude ancêtre américain, avait, un demi-siècle plus tôt, fait évoluer dans un chenal étroit, à travers des bas-fonds, un grand vaisseau piloté par le mystérieux aventurier Paul Jones. C'est en effet dans la baie de Morecambe [19] que le schooner *Ariel* et une frégate américaine, connus de tous les lecteurs du *Pilote*, sont surpris par le mauvais temps et doivent prendre le large. La goëlette n'a point de peine à gagner la haute mer, mais le bâtiment de guerre, à cause de son grand tirant d'eau, est exposé à chaque instant au risque de toucher. Sa sortie de la passe est racontée avec une précision fort digne d'intérêt. Le brave Cooper, tout fier d'avoir servi comme matelot [20], nous fait largement profiter de son expérience de manœuvrier. Il ne manque au récit de l'honnête bas-de-cuir qu'un peu d'imagination. On y chercherait en vain la poésie du *Covenant*, la fraîcheur de ce beau clair de lune sur les flots, l'effroi des brisants, aux jaillissements de fontaines, le tressaillement du brick blessé à mort, ouvrant ses ailes pour prendre son essor avant l'engloutissement [21].

Judging the *Pilot* from a more general point of view, Miss M. M. GIBB, in 1927 (22), places that work at the head of Cooper's sea tales. Her comments upon Long Tom and Paul Jones are not, however, particularly flattering (23) :

La série maritime est, dans l'ensemble, supérieure à la pre-

(17) We use the translation given by BRANDER MATTHEWS in the *Atlantic Monthly* for September 1907, p. 337. We have not been able to find out which of the numerous works of the admiral contains the often quoted remark.

(18) Cf. p. 342.

(19) The critic forgets that, while the actual raids of Paul Jones took place on the Western coast of Great Britain, the fictitious raid described in the *Pilot* is supposed to have been effected on the shores of the German Ocean.

(20) Again the critic forgets that Cooper served for more than two years as a midshipman in the U. S. Navy.

(21) It is the wreck of the *Ariel* which ought to have been compared with this episode.

(22) Cf. *Le Roman de Bas-de-Cuir*, Sorbonne Ph. D.

(23) *Ibid.* pp. 13, 9 and 10.

mière série [la série historique]. Comme dans celle-ci, c'est le premier roman qui est le meilleur. *Le Pilote*, écrit un an après *L'Espion*, est un excellent roman. Le sujet était nouveau en 1824, et la valeur artistique du roman est grande en ce qu'il contient d'admirables descriptions, par exemple celle de la bataille navale entre l'*Ariel* et l'*Alacrity*, et de la fuite de la frégate américaine d'entre les bancs de sable. Le récit pêche tant soit peu par excès de détails techniques, mais l'abus est moins marqué ici qu'ailleurs...

Dans la série maritime, on trouve quelques personnages plaisants, parmi eux Long Tom Coffin, patron de l'*Ariel*, mais il faut lui dire adieu sans faire sa connaissance intime...

Quand le romancier aspire à peindre des corsaires, le résultat plaît encore moins. La tendance à l'artificiel et à la fanfaronnade se trahit déjà dans les tirades de John Paul Jones, dans la scène finale entre lui et sa fiancée, dont le « silence profond et mortifié » est compréhensible (5).

A year later, G. C. BOSSET, in her study of Cooper's influence on French marine novelists (24), once more bears witness to the originality and beauty of the sea passages in the Pilot. She notes, it is true, that they do not make easy reading, but that is perhaps because she has failed to read them in the proper spirit, we mean without trying to understand fully all their technicalities, so as to lend herself to what Lounsbury called « the impressiveness of the unknown ». As for her contention that the story itself is absolutely devoid of interest, it is, of course, flatly contradicted by the lasting popularity of the Pilot :

[Cooper] sut donner dès son premier essai une interprétation littéraire singulièrement originale de la vie maritime. *Le Pilote* parut en 1824. Il renfermait une intrigue amoureuse et politique infiniment compliquée et dénuée de tout intérêt, dont la technique rappelle beaucoup celle de Walter Scott, et quelques pages d'une puissance descriptive et dramatique qu'aucun écrivain n'avait encore égalée, du moins dans les limites étroites que ce genre assigne à l'artiste...

Ces pages sont belles par l'extraordinaire intensité de vie qui

(24) Cf. Fenimore Cooper et le Roman d'Aventure en France vers 1830, Sorbonne Ph. D. Paris, Vrin, 1928, p. 98.

s'en dégage peu à peu, au cours d'une lecture souvent difficile, pour quiconque y apporte une attention soutenue. Elles méritaient pleinement le succès qu'elles obtinrent presque dès le début, en France comme ailleurs. Pour la première fois, le public français pénétrait dans l'intimité des gens de mer et voyait se préciser devant ses yeux le drame quotidien qui constitue leur vie et qui se joue entre la mer, le vaisseau et la volonté de l'homme.

As regards character-drawing, G. C. Bosset, strangely enough, does not hesitate to show that she does not entertain a very high opinion of Long Tom. Is it because she is persuaded that it is now agreed that Cooper proved an utter failure as a painter of character ?

Tom Coffin a eu beaucoup de succès et les critiques de Cooper le citent volontiers avec Œil-de-Faucon comme donnant la mesure, dans ce domaine spécial, du talent créateur du romancier. Mais le portrait de Tom Coffin a quelque chose de très monotone ; le personnage est tout d'une pièce. Aucun imprévu dans sa conduite, aucune variété dans ses propos... Il n'est d'ailleurs plus nécessaire de faire remarquer que Fenimore Cooper était nul en matière de psychologie. Œil-de-Faucon si souvent vanté, est une idée plutôt qu'un homme et les seuls êtres vivants que l'on rencontre dans les Récits de Bas-de-Cuir sont les Indiens dont la psychologie est par définition très sommaire.

Finally G. C. Bosset considers that the Pilot is not such a decided naval picture as the *Red Rover*, and sees in this an explanation of the fact that it was not immediately copied in France :

[Le Pilote est un] ouvrage qui a ses admirateurs, mais ne fait point école, sans doute parce que l'élément maritime n'y est pas lié d'une manière intime au reste du récit et qu'il fait presque figure d'accessoire. Il est d'une nature trop technique et l'on aperçoit mal sa valeur littéraire propre. *Le Corsaire Rouge* est le premier ouvrage qui tente de présenter cet élément comme l'objet principal de l'interprétation artistique.

Conclusion

It is our hope that, even a hasty perusal of the foregoing pages, will prevent our readers from accepting the time-honoured but none the less erroneous statement of Cooper's first biographer, concerning the reception of the *Pilot* : « Its success, both in this country and in Europe was instantaneous. Far-sighted men saw at once that a new realm had been added to the domain of fiction » (1).

On the other hand, we trust we have shown that Cooper's little-known declarations on the subject (2) ought to be considered as correct in all particulars — except perhaps with regard to the charge of malice prepense brought against the *North American Review*.

It should be added, however, that, in spite of the very favourable reception awarded to the *Pilot* in Great Britain, the British reviewers themselves proved somewhat deficient in critical acumen, since they generally failed to perceive the essential difference between Cooper and Smollett, and to realize that they were confronted with the first genuine sea-novel ever written. It was only in the eighteen thirties that Cooper was widely recognized as the founder of a new genre in fiction (3), so that the oft-repeated phrase of the *Edinburgh* : « The empire of the sea has been conceded to him by acclamation » (4) is liable to prove misleading.

(1) Cf. LOUNSBURY, p. 47.

(2) See the autobiographical notes quoted at the beginning of the present chapter.

(3) See especially : EUGÈNE SUE's preface to *Atar Gull* (May 1831) ; MARRYATT's *Metropolitan Magazine* for August 1831, and the *North American Review* for January 1838.

(4) Cf. April 1835, pp. 123-24.

With reference to the rank occupied by the Pilot among Cooper's sea tales, it can fairly be said that it shares the first place with the *Red Rover*, since critical opinion, though divided always on the respective merits of the two novels, has always been positive that the palm could only be awarded to one of the two.

As for the classification of the beauties and defects ascribed to the Pilot proper, it may be said to be varied to the point of undermining one's faith in the value of literary criticism.

While most critics seem to be agreed that the chief excellence of the novel lies in its magnificent « gallery of marine pictures » (5), an early reviewer in Dennie's *Portfolio* (Philadelphia, 1824) would as easily dispense with them as a modern French critic like JULES DOUADY (1912).

The land scenes, on the other hand, are warmly praised by the aforesaid *Portfolio* — and vindicated as very useful for the conduct of the plot by JOHN ERSKINE (U.S. 1910) — while they are barely tolerated by the average reviewer.

If Long Tom Coffin is generally admired for being what CONRAD called « a monumental seaman with the individuality of life and the significance of a type, » he is not a real sailor for the *Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review* (E. 1843) and he is taken by G. C. BOSSET (Sorbonne, Ph. D., 1928) as an instance of Cooper's utter lack of psychological insight.

Inversely, the mysterious pilot, so often criticized for his Byronic attitudes, is praised in the eighteen twenties by the *North American Review* and Miss MITFORD, and later on by W. G. SIMMS and the elder DUMAS.

The female characters, commonly dismissed as conventional, are not without willing advocates, in both America, England and France (6).

The plot is sometimes censured for its improbability (7)

(5) The phrase is to be found in the *Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review* for October 1843.

(6) Cf. *The Museum* (Eng. 1824); LOUIS DE LOMÉNIE (Fr. 1844) and L. H. VINCENT (U. S. 1906).

(7) Cf. *Literary Gazette* and *La Belle Assemblée* (Eng. 1824).

and its conventionality (8), but it is also praised for its sustained interest (9), and for the skilful management of the love intrigue (10).

The style is said by the *North American* (1824) to present the same prominent defects as that of the *Spy*, and to suffer therefore from an excessive minuteness in the descriptions, as well as from the stilted language so much in vogue among the Americans of that period. In the same month, however, the *United States Literary Gazette* notices a marked improvement, which it ascribes to « careful revision ».

The use of what Dennie's *Portfolio* disparagingly describes as « the peculiar jargon of seamen » (1824) is warmly vindicated by LOUNSBURY (1883), who commends Cooper's « artistic appreciation of the impressiveness of the unknown. »

Finally Cooper is, in succession, praised for his infectious patriotism by the *North American Review* (1824), thanked for his courteous attitude by such British periodicals as the *Museum* (1824) and *Blackwood's* (1826), and criticized for his exaggerated Americanism by the *Literary Gazette* (E. 1824) and THOMAS POWELL (E. 1850).

Let us not forget, however, that, in the midst of such a medley of conflicting appreciations, one can at least rely on this fact that, ever since the *Pilot* was recognized as the first genuine sea novel, it has never ceased to be considered as a great classic of the sea, and admired as such by generations of well-informed critics the world over.

(8) Cf. BARRET WENDELL (U. S. 1900).

(9) Cf. *U. S. Literary Gazette* (1824).

(10) Cf. *Annales de la Littérature et des Arts* (1824).

LIONEL LINCOLN

America

In his autobiographical notes Cooper bluntly states that Lionel Lincoln proved a failure :

This book failed, and perhaps justly. It was strictly an American Historical Novel, a class of which none ever succeeded. The end of the author's career was now openly announced... This was intended for an historical novel, on an American theme. It failed, like every other similar attempt.

Cooper's words, however, should not be taken too literally. It should not be inferred, for instance, that favourable reviews of Lionel Lincoln cannot be found in the American periodicals of the time. The well-established reputation of the author of the *Spy* and of the *Pilot*, the natural desire to encourage « The American Novelist » to go on with his plan of publishing his *LEGENDS OF THE THIRTEEN REPUBLICS*, the national enthusiasm — and sometimes the local pride — aroused by a tale of Lexington and Bunker Hill, and finally some undeniable merits in the novel itself could not but influence certain critics.

The flattering review of Lionel Lincoln in the *United States Literary Gazette* for March 1, 1825 is a case in point (1).

The patriotic enthusiasm of the critic is apparent at the very beginning of the review proper, which is preceded by a long disquisition on the growth of American literature and the progress of the art of novel-writing.

(1) Cf. pp. 337-40.

The faculty of giving to a story that dramatic interest, which arises from variety of character, forcible delineation, and picturesque grouping, or, in other words, the powers of observation, discrimination, and description are possessed by Mr. Cooper in a very high degree ; and it is with national pride and pleasure that we see these powers employed upon subjects so worthy of them. Brief as is the period since history first saw our infant nation cradled in a howling wilderness, she has found much to tell of deeds of high emprise. She offers to the novelist abundance of materials, — the harvest is rich enough, and we rejoice to welcome labourers so worthy to gather it.

The historical parts of the novel are then praised with much warmth :

The peculiar state of the country and the feelings of the colonists ; the nightmarch of the troops to Lexington and their disastrous retreat ; the battle and storm of the Bunker Hill redoubt ; and the circumstances of a besieged town, are all described with force, feeling, and spirit. In short, Mr. Cooper has selected, in this instance, a period and a subject replete with interest, and has done great justice to both.

When he comes to the characters, the reviewer — on purpose it would seem — omits to comment upon the leading ones, the half-witted Job excepted :

Beside the characters principally concerned in the conduct of the main action, there are various accessories, who are by no means the least interesting. Dennis M'Fuse, an Irish grenadier officer, and Peter Polwarth, a corpulent captain, stand in the front rank among these ; and with respect to the former we only regret that the author should have found it necessary to kill him, in the first volume. We think the character of M'Fuse, and that of Seth Sage, the Yankee landlord, among the author's happiest efforts. That of Polwarth, though on the whole very well executed, is sometimes, to use a word from the Captain's own vocabulary, a little « overdone ». This excess of colouring is indeed one of Mr. Cooper's faults, but it is one that experience will mend, and is very different in that particular, from its opposite tameness. In fact he has been thus improving in each successive work ; there is less caricature in the one before us, than in the preceding.

...The young midshipman, though present but for a few pages, is distinguished by those masterly touches, which mark the favourite subject of an artist.

The unpleasant task of pointing out the defects of the novel is then skilfully avoided by the good-natured critic :

We have marked several faults of minor importance in the course of two several perusals of this work ; they are principally however of a kind, which has been noticed in various criticisms of his preceding works. We are, moreover, glad to avail ourselves of the excuse afforded us by the consideration of the space already occupied by this article to omit this disagreeable part of our office.

The conclusion which follows is no doubt intended to encourage the author to persevere in his undertaking, but its critical value is far from negligible, as a careful study of Lionel Lincoln will prove :

It remains for us only to say a few words of the relative merits of this, when compared with the former works of the same author. Considered as a work of genius it is perhaps superior to the *Spy*, and inferior to the *Pioneers* or the *Pilot*, while in point of literary execution it excels them all ; and if it shall be decided to be less interesting on the whole than the two latter, it must be admitted that it contains fewer parts that are absolutely tedious, and fewer offences against good taste. We hope he may find, in the remaining provinces, subjects as good as that afforded by the « Bay Colony, » and we have no doubt he will use them to as good purpose.

For all that, Lionel Lincoln never approached the success of the *Spy* and of the *Pilot* ; it was a *comparative* failure. This, however, is rather indicated by the silence of American periodicals at the time of publication than by their expressed disapproval.

After that date, and until Cooper's death, a few occasional references to the reception of the work, together with complimentary comments on some of its features, are to be met with here and there.

In July 1826 the *North American* (2) is grateful for the romantic glamour which Cooper's novel has shed on the old streets and alleys of Boston :

The same sort of magical authority over the spirit of romance, which belongs in common to Scott, Radcliffe, Walpole, and our countryman Brown, is, for us at least, possessed by this writer in an eminent degree. Places, for example, familiar to us from our boyhood, and which are now daily before our eyes, thronged with the vulgar associations of real life, are boldly seized upon for scenes of the wildest romance ; and yet our imaginations do not revolt at the incongruity. We land with Lionel on the Long Wharf of Boston, and, under the guidance of Job Pray, tread its blind alleys, and wind through its crooked streets, the same which we pass daily in our common avocations, with much of the same feeling of adventure, with which we make our way into the Heart of Mid Lothian, or to the Sanctuary of White Friars...

Further on, however, the historical personages are declared « slight sketches... by no means touched by a master's hand ».

On August 11, 1827 the *New York Mirror* (3) deems that silence is still the best policy with regard to Lionel Lincoln :

We come next to Lionel Lincoln — and here we find so great a falling off, that we are glad to pass it over in silence, and devote the rest of our limits to the works that have followed it.

Some ten years later, however, the *Southern Literary Messenger* (4) contains a startling paragraph concerning the popularity of Lionel Lincoln in New England :

Lionel Lincoln soon followed the *Pilot*, in 1825 ; and its popularity was unprecedented. The scenes of this romance are laid in Boston during its occupation by the British troops, at the beginning of the revolutionary struggle. It is second, in

(2) Cf. pp. 152 and 155 (in a review of *Mohicans and Pioneers*, by W. H. GARDINER).

(3) Cf. p. 39 (General article).

(4) June 1838, p. 375 (General article).

point of merit, to others by the same author, but yields to none of them in interest. It was this production that created in Boston and throughout New England, a popularity for Mr. Cooper's works, at one period so great, as to become among novel readers, almost a mania.

In 1847 GRISWOLD, while following as usual Cooper's autobiographical notes, adds a few comments on the masterly characterization of Ralph and Job :

Lionel Lincoln followed. This was a second attempt to imbode history in an American work of fiction. It failed, and perhaps justly ; yet it contains one of the nicest delineations of character in Mr. Cooper's works. I know of no instance in which the distinction between a maniac and an idiot is so admirably drawn ; the setting was bad, however, and the picture was not examined. (5)

Shortly after Cooper's death, the historian BANCROFT highly praised Cooper's description of the battle of Bunker Hill at a meeting of the New York Historical Society (October 7 th, 1851) :

Great as he was in the department of romantic fiction, he was not less deserving of praise in that of history. In Lionel Lincoln he has described the battle of Bunker Hill better than it is described in any other work. (6)

A few months later, however, BRYANT's *Memorial Discourse* dismisses Lionel Lincoln with the brief statement that it « cannot be ranked among the successful productions of Cooper. » (7)

In September 1860 the *National Quarterly Review* (8) has an interesting remark on the plot of the novel :

« Lionel Lincoln » presents one of the two or three exceptions to a rule which the author seems to have been guided by

(5) Cf. p. 264. Griswold's comments on Ralph and Job may have been suggested by the repeated statements of the renowned physician alluded to by Susan Fenimore Cooper in *Pages and Pictures*. See later, p. 271.

(6) Cf. *Memorial of J. F. C.*, 1852, p. 16.

(7) *Ibid.* p. 50.

(8) Cf. p. 305.

from the beginning to the close of his career as a novelist — namely, that of introducing a flight and pursuit as frequently as possible. There are those whose opinions are worthy of respect who maintain that the chief elements of the author's success lie in this plan. There is certainly no more effectual means of awakening sympathy than to place honest, upright men, or virtuous, amiable women, in a position of danger, where they are forced to seek safety in flight, but are closely pursued by those able and willing to injure them. Even those whom we know to be criminals sometimes win our sympathies in circumstances of this kind.

After this long series of fragmentary appreciations, S. F. C's elaborate and illuminating criticism in *Pages and Pictures* (1861) is particularly welcome (9). Her defence of her father's choice of a loyalist hero is at once able and spirited :

The leading idea of this book has been considered as in itself a mistake ; as presenting difficulties which, by their nature, were all but insuperable. It was the wish of the writer to draw, in the character of Lionel Lincoln, the representative of a large and honorable class of men, intimately connected with the country and its history, by birth and association, but whose political conviction and action were directly opposed to the triumphant party... The feeling of loyalty to a sovereign may be not only natural and strong, but highly honorable also in those born subjects to a crown. It was a feeling which had great depth in many of the best American hearts of the period of the Revolution — one which long swayed the thought and action of Washington himself...

Such a character as that of Lionel was, therefore, not only natural, but could be proved to have had actual existence. The struggles which such a man, in a similar position, must necessarily go through in the thrilling scenes of a political revolution, offered, indeed, all the necessary materials for interest in a work of fiction.

The fact that Lionel, the intended hero of the novel, turns out to be a mere nominal hero, is accounted for in a convincing manner :

The error in Mr. Cooper's novel did not, therefore, lie

(9) Cf. pp. 99-101,

essentially in the conception of the character of his nominal hero. The greatest obstacle was to be found rather in the position of the author himself : his own sympathies were in fact too strongly enlisted in the opposite direction. While the general outline of the sketch was accurate, and capable of being well filled up, in the details of the work he did not render justice to the character he had himself conceived, he became weary of his task ; his own interest in what he had intended for the principal figure of the picture flagged, and, as an inevitable consequence, that of the reader was not sufficiently aroused. A writer of colder temperament, of less earnest sincerity of nature might have executed the same task much more successfully. In reading *Lionel Lincoln*, we find that the principal personage does not grow upon us ; as we proceed in the book we are constantly expecting some new combination of circumstances, some stirring scene, some great event, which shall bring him into higher and clearer relief. Such events occur, such scenes are given in the narrative ; but throughout the book, the figure of Lionel never really fills the eye of the reader, never entirely engrosses his attentions and sympathies. We close the tale with the conviction that we have made the acquaintance of an agreeable, gentlemanly and honorable young officer of the grenadiers, and nothing more. The author himself was dissatisfied with his work. In his own opinion, a tale connected with the wonderful siege of Boston, and the memorable battle of Bunker Hill, should have presented some more striking character to the reader than that of *Lionel Lincoln*.

With regard to the characters of Ralph and Job, S. F. C. takes care to quote the opinion of a renowned physician in support of her own flattering comments :

As if to accumulate obstacles for himself, in this book, not content with the embarrassments belonging to the position of the young American officer enlisted on the side of the crown, the author introduced into the tale two additional characters, each in itself full of unusual difficulties. We have good authority, however, for asserting that in both these instances the task was skilfully managed... One of the best physicians in the country repeatedly declared that the nice distinctions between the different shades of disordered reason in Ralph and Job, were drawn with truth and skill.

Finally, the explanation of the gradual transformation of

Job into the actual hero of the work is, in every way, worthy of the fine passage on Lionel :

The natural channel in which the author's sympathies were actually flowing, is clearly betrayed in the sketch of Job, who soon becomes a favorite with the reader. His just, yet half-blind indignation against an oppression which had aroused the noblest minds in the country ; his prejudices, honest and natural, but violent and vulgar ; his instinctive love of country ; his affection for his mother ; his generous feeling for Lionel ; the petty cunning invariably connected with his diseased mind ; the little Yankee peculiarities engrafted on his character ; the strange blending of courage and cowardice in his infirm nature, make up together a sketch of much truth and merit. The poor half-witted son of Abigail, the tenant of the old warehouse, becomes, in fact, the true hero of the book.

Some twenty years later LOUNSBURY's criticism of Lionel Lincoln (10) is just as stimulating, and even more detailed. At the same time it differs widely from that of the novelist's daughter, since Cooper's biographer categorically declares that « Lionel Lincoln is certainly one of Cooper's most signal failures. » As to the reasons of this failure, they are to be found in the fact that both the setting and the plot of the story are of a kind which Cooper was not fit to handle :

New England was always to Cooper an ungenial clime, both as regards his creative activity and his critical appreciation. The moment he touched its soil, his strength seemed to abandon him... Lionel Lincoln is the story of crime long hidden from the knowledge of men, but dogging with unceasing activity the memories of those concerned in it. But the secret chambers of the soul into which the guilty man never looks willingly, Cooper could neither enter himself nor lay bare to others... The vagueness and indefiniteness with which this story abounds is not, therefore, that impressive obscurity which springs from the mysterious : it is, on the contrary, the obscurity of the unintelligible and absurd... The mind revolts at finding the actors in the drama represented as having committed monstrous crimes, without any reason that is worth mentioning.

In other words, as one might put it, Cooper was wrong to attempt a subject exactly suited to Hawthorne's genius and uncongenial to his own.

Lounsbury further disagrees with S. F. C. in his sweeping denunciation of Cooper's treatment of this unfortunate subject :

This radical defect in the plan is not counterbalanced by any felicity in the execution. Many of the incidents are more than improbable, they are impossible. The style, likewise, is labored, and the conversations combine the two undesirable peculiarities of being both stilted and dull. The characters, female or male, are in no case successfully drawn. The inferior ones, introduced to amuse, serve only to depress the reader. The hero in the course of the tale does several absurd things ; but he finally surpasses himself by hurrying away from the woman he loves, without her knowledge, immediately after he has been joined to her in marriage. The representation of the half-witted Job — a character upon which the author clearly labored hard — neither arouses interest nor touches the heart. It is, indeed, impossible to feel much sympathy with one particular imbecile, no matter how patriotic, in a story where most of the actors are represented as acting like idiots.

The only praise Lounsbury consents to award Lionel Lincoln concerns the battle scenes :

Nothing that industry could do was spared by Cooper to make this work a success... As a result of all this labor he has furnished us an admirable description of the engagement at Concord Bridge, of the running fight of Lexington, and of the battle of Bunker's Hill. Of the last, it is, according to the sufficient authority of Bancroft, the best account ever given. At this point praise must stop.

Whatever the respective merits of the two foregoing studies of Lionel Lincoln, the fact remains that modern critics have chosen to follow Lounsbury, and that Cooper's novel is now chiefly remembered for its faithful descriptions of the first revolutionary engagements.

Professor W. L. CROSS (11), it is true, considers that even

(11) Cf. *The Development of the English Novel* (1899), p. 152,

these descriptions have not been able to prevent the work from falling into oblivion :

At genuinely historical work, requiring the examination of historical documents, Cooper, was, so far as posterity is concerned, an utter failure. « *Lionel Lincoln* », with its graphic and accurate description of the battle of Bunker Hill, is no longer read.

JOHN ERSKINE (12), however, does not quite share that opinion :

The historical scenes — the fights at Concord and Lexington and Bunker Hill — have received the praise of qualified critics, and still are interesting. The main plot, however, an extremely complicated domestic intrigue, not only is ineffective in itself, but it has no necessary connection with the history. The average reader would find little in the book to suggest Cooper's familiar qualities ; it is the more unfortunate, since the historical background is elaborated with such unusual truth and effect.

In 1921 CARL VAN DOREN (13) praises the battle of Bunker Hill but concentrates on Cooper's failure, which he ascribes to one of the causes already mentioned by Lounsbury, the choice of a New England setting :

His account of the battle is in his best vein : but for the rest, Cooper was too unsympathetic toward the New England character and, in spite of all his research, too little at home in Massachusetts for his imagination to be inflamed by this material .

Four years later, on the other hand, F. L. PATTEE (14) overlooks the battle scenes altogether and explains Cooper's failure by the second of Lounsbury's reasons :

His plot he made of Boston quality, a *motif* of Hawthorne texture, a shuddery legend of the Province House, an old sin that had blighted three generations suddenly emergent. He was unable to handle it. So complete was the failure of the book that we hear no more of the other twelve that were to follow it.

(12) Cf. *Leading American Novelists* (1910), p. 76.

(13) Cf. *The American Novel*, p. 32.

(14) Cf. *American Mercury*, March 1925, p. 294.

England

Both the number and the tone of the English reviews of Lionel Lincoln would suffice to show that this novel did not prove a complete failure in Great Britain.

The *Literary Gazette* for March 5, 1825 is indeed bitterly ironical, but it appears as an isolated instance of national animosity (1). Overlooking Cooper's broad-minded delineation of his loyalist hero, the reviewer indulges in a sarcastic account of the political background of the story :

[84] The present work is connected with a sort of history of the early movements in the American war, and remarkable for being pretty particularly American, considerably Anti-Anglican, and genuine Republican. We have the *Battle* of Lexington, (heaven help the names !) and the *Battle* of Bunker's Hill, and the siege or leaguer forsooth, of Boston, and the immortal patriot Washington, and the oppressive English government, and the bloody British grenadiers, and the glorious plough-boy heroes of Massachussets who beat them, and all the rest of it, shown up as seen by transatlantic optics, as truly and clearly as the Sea Serpent itself.

The same tone pervades the criticism of the characters of Ralph and Job :

But we have also fictitious personages introduced (though Mr. Cooper maketh oath and saith they are only so in name), and are thence instructed that the separation of the colonies from the mother country was effected principally through the agency of a mad old gentleman, called Ralph, (after the Ravens we suppose, for he is a deuce of a croaker,) and an idiot lad

(1) Cf. pp. 149-51.

called Job Pray, who [runs] errands at Boston, and delivereth his oracles in real Bostonian attic, and fires his rifle with real backwood accuracy...

... Job is ill defined — a poor copy after the *Naturals* of the Scottish Shakspeare, who takes a care not to set down more for his clowns than they can do ; whereas Mr. Cooper gifts his with ubiquity, and a wonderful quantity of influence upon events entirely beyond the scope of possibility. For a long while we expected that Job Pray would turn out to be some Brutus assuming idiocy to cover his designs ; and were surprised at his dying of the small-pox, a mere fool at last.

A few of the minor characters are judged, however, from a literary point of view :

Nor is Mr. Cooper happy in his subordinate characters. His English epicure Captain Polwarth, breaking up his wooden leg to broil a turkey, is a rank caricature ; and his Irish grenadier, Captain M'Fuse, little less exaggerated. Abigail, the mother of Job, is another palpable copy after the Scottish Wildfires — fires too wild for this author to catch.

The plot is criticized for the improbabilities in the conduct of the hero — particularly his flight on the evening of his marriage, and the consequent and extraordinary adventures of his bride. Besides, « the story is... involved and unsatisfactory. There is an everlasting aim at forcible expression, and pathetic or appalling situation, but rarely successful. »

Yet Job's death is quoted at length as the author's « best effort », and the conclusion that follows is much milder than one had reason to expect :

From these extracts it may be gathered, that though very unequal to the model on which it is fashioned, there is yet sufficient merit in this novel to render it interesting to the clan of readers who seek amusement in such productions. It certainly violates all probability too far to excite sympathy ; but some of its descriptions are spirited, and it will serve to while away a tedious hour as well as many of its contemporaries.

A few days later, the Liverpool *Nepenthes* (2) begins a short

review of the new novel in a broad-minded and very flattering manner :

This *American Waverley* has sent another work into the world ; and while it is too national in its descriptions, and assumes too much for the general English reader, yet few can read the vivid touches he has drawn, and follow the portraiture of character he has sketched, without a sensible feeling that they are delighting themselves with the nearest representative of the Great Unknown that has ventured to tread in the same line, and to attempt the same manner of description, as the Scottish Shakspeare.

Cooper, however, is said to fall far short of his model in the delineation of character :

He does not draw his characters forcibly enough on the model of nature, which is simple, correct, and consistent ; but outrages propriety, and in the endeavour to do more than others, he slays poor common sense, and some of his characters, though still interesting, are only so from the situations in which they are placed, rather than as derived from their own peculiarities.

To conclude, the book is strongly recommended to English novel-readers :

But with these defects, Lionel is a novel that but few will read without much interest, and but very few will be found who can sketch with so much force, and introduce so much originality in their work. The style with but few exceptions, is in propria personæ. We would therefore advise all the admirers of the *Waverley* novels to read this, and draw their own conclusions : for we have not space to enter more at large into its merits, detail its plot, or to give its *denouement*.

The *Monthly Critical Gazette* for April (3), in a very friendly tone, repeatedly expresses its deep regret that Cooper should have forsaken the original field he had just discovered in order to become a mere imitator of « a bad model » — i. e. Walter Scott — and this, at the price of most unfortunate political consequences :

(3) Cf. pp. 458-61.

He has, unfortunately for America, for England, and for himself, followed the example of their author, and has compounded a literary mixture of truth and fiction, a jumble of history and romance, after the manner of Sir Walter, and produced an heterogeneous composition which must inevitably tend to bewilder, if not mislead the reader's mind upon important points of history. But what is still more to be lamented in the instance before us is, its tendency to rekindle political animosities in the people of America against Great Britain, which the best interest of both countries, no less than the duties and feelings of humanity, require to be buried in oblivion.

The reviewer, however, is broad-minded enough to understand and excuse the strong patriotic note in Lionel Lincoln, though Cooper's alleged lack of taste in following the author of *Waverley* cannot be so easily overlooked :

It is not, therefore, because Mr. Cooper has written an Anglo-American historical Romance with the warm feelings of an American that we censure him ; it is not his patriotism or his principles, but his taste that we condemn. We lament exceedingly that he has been induced, from any motive whatever to commit a sort of suicide upon his own literary reputation, by smothering on this occasion the original genius with which nature has gifted him, in order to become a servile copyist of what has ever been considered and proclaimed by us to be a bad model.

There follows an interesting attempt to trace the influence of Scott's romances upon the plot and characters of Lionel Lincoln, and to predict the probable future of all such productions :

We consequently meet with the same sort of wonder-working machinery in the adventures, and the same species of grotesque and spectral characters in the agents of this Romance, mixed up with the real events and performers of the first year of the American Revolutionary war, as our Scotch Novelist uniformly intermingles among the real transactions which occurred, and the real personages who actually took part in them during the civil wars and rebellions, which he has thought fit, most unhappily for the republic of letters to turn into novels.

This species of writing, as soon as the novelty of the

attempt has lost that charm, which all novelty in some degree produces, we have always been persuaded will occasion far more disgust than pleasure. In this country the novelty is already fading, and the comparative failure of the recent productions of the great inventor himself may be appealed to as demonstrative of the justice of our remarks.

A passage describing the shooting at Lexington is then quoted as a convincing proof that Cooper is « a master of his art », so that one is not unprepared for a flattering conclusion :

Our own conclusion, from the perusal of the present, but still more so of his former works, is that he has few living equals, and certainly not one in America ; but that very conviction gives a keener edge to our regret that he should select such a subject for the exercise of his powers as the leaguer of Boston.

In the September number of *Blackwood's Magazine* (4), JOHN NEAL takes advantage of Cooper's first stumble in his ascending career to vent his spleen upon his fellow-countryman and rival. He condescends however to praise Lionel Lincoln as giving the world a faint idea of the Great North American Story, on which is at work « one the very latchet of whose shoe, when he treads the soil of North America, over the great pathway of rebellion, Cooper were not worthy to loose » :

Mr. Cooper has wronged his early reputation by this unhappy affair. As a whole, though parts of it are fine, it is a poor book... It is a bachelor's babe — nothing more ; — one of those dwarfish, drowsy portraits, half made up, which lazy men, who never marry till they are too fat, or too rich, leave behind them, as a substitute for living creatures.

The Spy was worth a dozen of it. We never thought very highly of Mr. Cooper ; he has been greatly overrated by his countrymen ; he is too amiable ; too good a man — too popular, by half ; we never thought much of him ; yet are we disappointed, bitterly disappointed in this book. Still ; though it is not the very thing that we require, it is a type, a shadow, a somewhat, in the shape thereof ; the « shadow », perhaps,

(4) Cf. pp. 323-27 (*Late American Books*).

« of a coming event » — Who knows ? It is not a real North American story, to be sure ; but where shall we go for a real North American story ? is there such a thing, on earth ?...

Though Mr. Cooper's book is unworthy of him, still we cannot be very severe with it ; because, after all, if it be not a real North American story, as we have said before, it is very like one ; if not exactly that, for which we have been longing, it is the shadow, and perhaps the forerunner of it. And, although Mr. Cooper has not given us a single page of what is purely and absolutely American — a single phrase, we might say, in all that he has ever written ; or a single touch, neither of language, or thought, or character, which is absolutely true, yet has he done that now, for which we would give him great praise, very great. He has undertaken to write a story, altogether at *home*. He has made a picture, the plan, the drawing, the rough outline of which is American, though the characters, their costume, their look and attitude are not. He has thrown up, after a poor fashion, a poor structure ; but his materials are American ; the ground-work, at least ; and a part of the outside is truth, great historical truth. For that, he shall have praise, though the workmanship is bad, and a part of the stuff spoilt for ever ; because they who come after him, will profit by his failure ; and he himself, after a time, perhaps, may do that well, in rock, or marble, which he has now done badly in clay.

The plot is sharply criticized but the battle scenes and a few incidents are reluctantly approved of :

The story has no sort of interest, although it concerns a period which has no parallel in history ; the breaking out of the revolutionary war at Boston, Massachussetts Bay, where a few grave men got up a rebellion, very much as if it were a matter of serious duty ; a period of terrible interest, if it were talked about in a worthy fashion...

The battle of Lexington, though is well done. So is that of Bunker Hill — properly Breed's Hill. Parts of two or three scenes, which have little or no business where they are ; with five or six incidents rather out of keeping (like that of the shadowy arms, over-spreading the church roof,) are very good — even capital.

Among the characters, Seth Sage and, to a lesser extent, Old Nab, together with a few historical characters of secondary

importance in the novel, are the only ones to find a degree of favour with John Neal :

« Old Nab » is pretty well. The tavern-keeper at Boston, while he is taking security for his furniture — is very good, very. Washington (who is come to be the butt of almost every whippersnapper now), luckily for Mr. Cooper, does not appear at all in this book, though a trumpet is blown several times, to put us on our good behaviour...

Sir William Howe, Sir Henry Clinton, Burgoyne, Earl Percy, and a few others on the royal side, are sketched — awkwardly enough ; but we value the sketches, bad as they are, because we know that Mr. Cooper is indebted for them, to the good people of Massachussetts, where the war broke out ; and Charles Lee, though out of place, and rather out of drawing, is well done — pretty well done, we should say.

Job and Ralph, on the other hand, are severely dealt with :

The chief, Job Pray, is a changeling, a sort of idiot, (a very bad copy, too,) a fool, who talks better by half, than the people of sense about him ; and is always applied to, by the hero, whenever he lacks either advice or information, political or religious...

« Ralph » is nobody. He is an afterthought, we guess ; a sort of interlineation ; a bit of running accompaniment of mystery and surprise — like the « Spy » himself, without meaning or probability. What business had Ralph with a map, at night, in a deserted house ? Answer : because George Washington, the only hero that Mr. Cooper ever undertook before, had a map in his part (which map was very well received) in a similar situation — at night — on the top of a mountain. But why had George Washington a *map* there ? Answer : because Mr. Cooper was a midshipman of the United States navy ; and because all the great men that he had ever seen — suitably occupied in a time of great peril, had always a *chart* before them. Ralph, therefore, in the deserted house — at night ; and George Washington, therefore, at night, on the top of a high mountain, are — bless your heart — only two captains of the United States navy on a lee shore.

Polwarth and the female characters do not fare much better :

« Polwarth » is a character made as nine characters out of ten are lately made. He says the same thing, over and over again. Why not paste a label on his forehead, or write a phrase on his back — that were about as well ; if, to do a foolish thing fifty times over, be enough to constitute a *character*...

The females are, as heretofore, with Mr. Cooper, nice, tidy, pretty-behaved women, who hold up their heads, keep their elbows back — run about in a stately way, and talk very much like a book, never *going out*, or *coming in*, but « flying », or « gliding », or disappearing, or vanishing — « furtively ».

To sum up, John Neal considers that Cooper's chief defect in the delineation of character is want of realism :

The great fault of Mr. Cooper ; or a great fault with him, is this. He wants courage to describe that which he sees ; to record that, as it is — that, which he has power enough to see, as it is. The people of his book, with two or three exceptions, talk too well ; too much alike, wherever he wishes to make them appear well bred. He is afraid of his dignity, perhaps ; afraid if he make an idiot behave like an idiot, or talk like one, that he himself, — he, Mr. Cooper, may be thought one ; afraid, if he put bad grammar into the mouths of people, who as everybody knows, talk nothing else, in real life, that he himself may be charged with bad grammar. We are sorry for this. It is a great error ; but one which we hope to see done away with on every side, before long — everywhere — by everybody. (5)

(5) In connection with this point, see also the following passage (p. 322) :

« A word now, of the style ; or, of a style rather, which is getting sadly in vogue. We meet with it, everywhere. Cooper's late novel (of which more, by and by) is crowded with it ; and about half, or two thirds of all the poetry, which comes in our way, is guilty of it. One brief specimen will serve ;...

« We all know your opinion », *saith* he, to whom we are indebted for a « PEEP AT THE PILGRIMS », vol. II, p. 112, — « We all know *your* opinion ; but *methinks* a tongue, so eloquent as *thine*, should have won *your* cause *ere* this. » Beautiful, to be sure ! beautiful !... It is getting very, very common. The pathetic of this day, is crowded with it. Prose or poetry, it is all the same. Cooper, in his *Lionel Lincoln*, is forty times worse. Do the blockheads know, or do they not, pray, that a solemn style, and a familiar style, have no more business together, in the same period — or phrase, than two different languages ? What if we, desiring to show off, were to make up a period of two or three languages — after a shape like this, now — Ich — dois — amar à los pueblos, — what would be thought of our egregious folly ? Yet which is the more absurd ?

The *British Critic* for July 1826 (6) objects to the characters of Ralph and Polwarth, but, from sentimental reasons, criticizes that of Job much more sharply :

... The baronet, it must be confessed, belongs too much to that class of half-crazed, half-inspired, mysterious, and seven-leagued old people, those male and female Nornas, impervious to fatigue and physical wants, of whom we believe, Dame Anathema Maranatha of « Brambletye House » is the last representative ; and unfortunately for Captain Polwarth, the Falstaff of the piece, his wit is as heavy as his person, and seems entirely borrowed from Dr. Kitchener. Both these persons, however please us in their separate provinces much better than Job Pray, who seems destined for a sort of patriotic Davie Gellartly, but who, unlike that faithful simpleton, does not possess the common gratitude of a dog ; for he boasts of having shot the man from whose dish he has every day fed. Cant he inherits from his mother Abigail, whom some cockney critic appears to mistake for an attempt at a Meg Merrilies, « rebellion lay in his way and he found it » without any great sin ; but to become a hero of humble life, an idiot ought at least to possess the virtues of a beast.

Cooper, however, receives praise for his broad-minded treatment of the character of the hero and heroine and of the historical passages, as well as for the excellence of the latter :

Mr. Cooper has the good taste to preserve his hero true to his allegiance, which his fair cousin and mistress Miss Dynevor, a stanch and candid loyalist like himself, feels no inclination to shake...

The historical and military part is given with spirit and interest, and in a manner entirely free from fanfaronade ; so as very much to redeem the heaviness of the book in other respects...

About a year later, a short reference to Lionel Lincoln in the *New London Literary Gazette* for August 25. 1827 shows that Cooper's novel is still considered of some value as a picture of America during the revolutionary struggle :

« Lionel Lincoln » gives also an animated description of

(6) Cf. pp. 429-30 (*American Novels*).

American character, of the town and society of Boston, and of the English Army and its superior officers, then under Sir William Howe.

The *Spirit of Literature* for October 30, 1830 (8) considers the description of the battle of Bunker Hill, and that of the snowstorm on the hero's wedding night, as « superior to anything of Mr. Cooper's elsewhere. » But it waxes indignant in its appreciation of the plot, while it indulges in ironical comments upon Job and Ralph :

Ever since Walter Scott has been republishing his novels with notes and introductions, we have been wishing that Mr. Cooper would follow his example, that we might have the satisfaction of seeing his explanation of the catastrophe of « Lionel Lincoln ». The plot of this tale is detestably unsufferably, disgracefully bad — the termination absolutely incomprehensible, although we once read it through for the purpose of deciphering it, with an attention similar to that we should pay to a treatise on hieroglyphics... It is singular enough that the author, all throughout most zealous for the honor of his country, makes in this novel an idiot and a madman two principal actors in the cause of American independence. Pretty supporters truly !

In September 1832 Lionel Lincoln has still enough vitality to be reprinted as number 20 of Colburn's collection of Standard Novels. But the *Gentleman's Magazine* (9), in the favourable notice it devotes to the new publication, prefers to dwell on Cooper's talent in general and dismisses the book with few technical comments :

This is one of those publications which at once does credit to the proprietor and justice to the public. A beautiful close re-print with lovely embellishments in a single cabinet volume for six shillings, shuts out the violation of literary property and imposition on the reader by *paltry* piracy ; and nothing therefore can be more praiseworthy in all respects.

This volume, as well as others of the series, has, besides its other merits, the advantage of revision, very useful notes by the author, and an introduction.

(7) Cf. pp. 182-83. (In a review of the *Mohicans*.)

(8) Cf. p. 46. (In a review of the *Water Witch*.)

(9) Cf. Part II, p. 629.

France

As early as February 12, 1825, the following note in the *Globe* must have awakened a certain interest in the fate of Lionel Lincoln :

Bulletin Littéraire de Londres. (Correspondance particulière). C'est la semaine prochaine que paraît le *Lionel Lincoln* de M. Cooper. Le premier volume ayant fait naufrage dans le trajet de New-York à Londres (*), on prétend que l'auteur anglais [1] l'a fait recomposer à la hâte par un de nos auteurs à la mode, de peur d'être devancé dans la publication par les auteurs de Paris, qui, comme lui, reçoivent d'avance les épreuves. Si cela est, nous ne serons pas surpris que l'édition de Londres fût la meilleure ; car nous n'appelons pas à Londres, comme vous faites à Paris, M. Cooper, le *Walter Scott américain* ; peut-être le deviendra-t-il, car qui aurait deviné l'auteur du *Pilote* dans *Précaution*, qui fut son premier roman ?

T.

* Le *Diamant*, qui portait les deux premiers volumes de *Lionel Lincoln* pour la réimpression de Londres et la traduction française de Paris, a péri dans la baie de Cardignan (sic). N. D. R.

About a month later, a second note (2) announces that Lionel Lincoln does not meet in London with a very warm reception. This lack of success, it is said, may be due to political reasons, but also to a dislike for the improbable character of Ralph.

Finally, on April 21, 1825, E. D. publishes an elaborate review of Defauconpret's « hasty » translation (3). A French reviewer, of course, had no political reason to disapprove of

(1) The writer probably means « the publisher ».

(2) Cf. March 15, 1825, p. 402.

(3) Cf. pp. 487-88. The *Bibliographie de la France* announces the publication of this translation on March 26.

the choice of the subject, but E. D. takes pains to show why the American Revolution is a fit subject for an historical novel :

C'est une heureuse idée que celle conçue par M. Cooper, de retracer à ses compatriotes les premiers temps de la guerre de l'indépendance. Cette lutte est déjà assez loin d'eux pour avoir tout le charme d'un souvenir, et assez près pour que le romancier puisse recueillir des traditions certaines, connaître des opinions qui en partie subsistent encore, et bien entrer dans l'esprit du peuple américain, qui se développe, mais n'est pas changé, et puis quel tableau plus propre à flatter l'orgueil national et à faire sourire les amis de la liberté de tous les pays ?

Unfortunately the characters are, on the whole, badly drawn, that of Ralph particularly so. Besides — and this is a somewhat original remark — several of the American personages are not distinctively American :

Le pastel de miss Edgeworth ne convient pas à la main ferme de M. Cooper, il l'écrase ; malheureusement il s'en est servi pour tracer tous ses caractères, et a réservé le pinceau de Scott pour les descriptions : aussi aucun d'eux n'est-il irréprochable. Lionel Lincoln, son héros, a du moins l'avantage, quelque fade et ennuyeux qu'il soit, de représenter l'esprit de la saine partie de l'armée anglaise, qui combattait sans fanatisme, mais croyait son honneur engagé à combattre, et, ne méconnaissant pas les droits des Américains, avait la profonde conviction de leur impossibilité de les faire valoir. Mais mistriss (sic) Lechmere, mais les deux cousines, mais Ralph, mais la mère de l'idiot, mais l'idiot lui-même n'habitent que grâce au romancier la ville de Boston ; ils sont Espagnols, Italiens, Français, autant qu'Américains, et figureraient aussi bien dans les salons de Miss Burnet (sic), ou dans les châteaux de Ratcliffe que dans les murs de la cité de l'indépendance. Le caractère de Ralph est surtout mal tracé... c'est un singulier représentant du patriotisme américain que cet échappé de Bedlam, qui veut étouffer son gardien.

The plot also is lacking in Americanism :

L'intrigue du roman ne vaut guère mieux que les caractères ; elle est commune, et semble avoir été empruntée à l'un de ces nombreux romans qui nous ont représenté les crimes

de la noblesse italienne et les souterrains de ses châteaux. On a vu partout un époux auprès duquel on calomnie sa femme, une maîtresse abandonnée qui se venge, une mauvaise parente qui a une fille intéressante éprise du fils de celui qu'elle a persécuté. Il y a même, je crois, dans un des romans de Madame Ratcliffe une scène semblable à celle du mariage de Cécile. Tout cela est vulgaire, obscur, et paraît bien mesquin auprès de ce drame magnifique de la révolution américaine.

A still more original remark of E. D's is that the scene ought to have been laid outside Boston and wholly among the revolutionists :

Sans doute l'auteur aurait pu nous rendre intéressante la peinture de l'intérieur de Boston ; et même son livre s'ouvre par une très belle scène, qui nous introduit fort heureusement dans la ville. Mais bientôt Boston n'est plus pour lui le cœur de la révolution américaine ; c'est la demeure de deux jeunes filles, qui rougissent sans cesse, et que nous avons vues toutes semblables dans l'*Espion*, dans le *Pilote*, et beaucoup plus aimables et plus piquantes dans *Guy Mannering*...

Cooper a mal « choisi le lieu de la scène. Il l'a placé dans Boston, il eût fallu le mettre hors des murs ; il l'a placé chez les oppresseurs, et les révoltés sont toujours plus intéressants. Le lecteur est mal à l'aise entre ces murailles assiégées ; le Tasse n'a-t-il pas placé son action dans les tentes de Godefroy ? En effet, on ne peut pas plus s'intéresser dans un roman américain à un major anglais, que dans une épopée chrétienne, à un chef musulman. Les vœux du lecteur sont dans les campagnes ; c'est de Washington qu'il s'occupe et non de l'amour de Cécile pour un aristocrate anglais. » (4)

A proof of this is that the best scenes of the novel — and they are declared equal to Scott's — take place beyond the city walls :

On sent que l'auteur, fatigué de son intrigue, ne se complait que sur le champ de bataille de Lexington, sur les hauteurs de la ville, et sur les eaux de la baie. Mais quand il est sur son terrain, j'ose dire qu'il n'est pas inférieur à Scott lui-même.

(4) E. D. does not seem to remember that Lionel is an American by birth.

Finally Cooper's style is praised, but pronounced less beautiful than Scott's — an opinion which is not devoid of value since E. D. seems to possess a real knowledge of English :

Le style de M. Cooper est bien moins beau que celui de Scott, mais il ne manque ni d'originalité ni d'énergie. Il se sert avec bonheur, comme le romancier écossais, des mots de l'ancienne langue anglaise. On rencontre chez lui beaucoup de locutions familières à Shakespeare, ce qu'on ne trouverait pas dans Addison... Cette tendance provient, en Amérique, et de l'envie de conserver intact un idiome dont l'éloignement du centre de la littérature anglaise menace la pureté, et des relations bien moins fréquentes des Américains avec le continent européen.

In October 1825, a short notice on Cooper, printed by the *Revue Encyclopédique*, considers Lionel Lincoln as the least interesting of his novels but praises the battle scenes. This notice being signed « R. K. de l'université de Cambridge », it is reasonable to infer that it was probably written by an Englishman, but in that case, the tone of the last sentence is rather puzzling :

Lionel Lincoln est le moins attachant des romans de M. Cooper ; et les caractères qu'il y a représentés sont les moins intéressants de ceux qu'il a introduits dans ses écrits. Mais il rend compte du siège de Boston, des batailles de Lexington et de Bunker's-Hill, premières opérations militaires des insurgés américains et la chaleur avec laquelle ces faits sont décrits, la sympathie qu'on éprouve pour la cause de la liberté et pour les braves gens qui combattirent pour elle, font oublier la longueur du récit et l'in vraisemblance des caractères. (5)

In the *Globe* for July 2, 1827 (6), F. A. S. who has visited the United States, praises not only the historical scenes but the faithful description of localities and local customs :

(5) Cf. pp. 148-49. After all the reviewer may have been a graduate of Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass). At any rate, we hope he was not responsible for the title of his notice : « Lionel Lincoln, ou les *Ligueurs de Boston* » !

(6) Cf. pp. 205-206. (General article.)

Les descriptions de la bataille de Lexington et du siège de Boston, tous les détails du grand mouvement révolutionnaire, sont tracés de main de maître et avec une chaleur de patriotisme qui en double l'intérêt. Les peintures de localités et de mœurs locales sont parfaites...

Seth Sage est une excellente personnification, un peu chargée comme elles le sont toutes, du caractère général des états de la Nouvelle Angleterre, et spécialement du Massachussets.

For F. A. S., the hero and his bride are lacking in interest, but the secondary characters somewhat make up for this deficiency :

Nous avouons que le personnage principal, puisqu'il impose son nom au roman, nous semble faiblement tracé. Sans couleur personnelle, sans caractère marqué, sans autre mérite que celui d'être un *perfect gentleman*, il est éternellement indécis entre les deux partis en présence. Sa Cécile nous semble aussi beaucoup moins attachante que ne le sont d'ordinaire les figures de femmes que l'auteur place sur ses premiers plans.

L'intérêt est alimenté par les personnages accessoires.

Le mystérieux Ralph, la non moins mystérieuse Nab, mais surtout la conception neuve de l'idiot Job Pray, sorte de personnification de l'opinion publique, fournissent les effets les plus dramatiques. Nous nous bornerons à citer la dernière scène comme un morceau d'une effrayante vérité.

Unfortunately — and this is practically the only serious reproach to be found in this long review of Cooper's works — Ralph proves in the end a great disappointment for true friends of liberty like F. A. S., to whom the return of Lionel to England is another unexpected blow :

Mais il est un reproche beaucoup plus grave que nous devons faire... c'est que le caractère moral que nous avons signalé dans les ouvrages de l'auteur américain semble dans les dernières pages manquer à celui-ci. Après avoir déjà souffert, dans le cours du roman, de voir le héros demeurer étranger à une cause qui nous est pourtant sans cesse présentée par l'écrivain patriote comme sacrée, on est péniblement affecté quand on découvre à la fin du livre, que ce vieillard mystérieux qu'entouraient notre intérêt et notre respect, dont l'auteur, en

lui donnant un langage plein d'enthousiasme, de dévouement exalté et d'idées généreuses, semblait avoir voulu faire le représentant des idées de liberté et d'indépendance, en découvrant, disons-nous, que ce vieillard est un maniaque échappé de Bedlam.... Ce désappointement se renouvelle encore quand, après ce premier dénouement inattendu, on voit le héros, qui vient d'assister au glorieux spectacle de l'affranchissement de sa patrie, aller, comme la chose la plus naturelle, retrouver en Angleterre sa baronnie, son bourg pourri, et mendier à la cour un coronnet... Ce qui nous console un peu, c'est que Lionel Lincoln, tout parfait gentleman qu'il est, nous est aussi représenté comme un peu timbré. A parler sérieusement, nous savons fort bien que ce n'est point dans un esprit aussi supérieur, aussi indépendant, aussi franchement patriote et républicain que celui de l'auteur, que de telles idées ont pu exister, et nous nous bornons à regretter que quelques lignes malheureuses à la fin de son livre puissent produire de telles impressions.

In November of the same year, the *Revue Encyclopédique* (7) also finds fault with Ralph's death, but merely from the point of view of verisimilitude :

...il meurt, au moment où on le reconnaît, frappé de trois coups de couteau par son geôlier de Londres, qui l'a suivi, on ne sait comment, et sans que son fils fasse le moindre effort pour le défendre.

The main criticism of the article, however, is levelled at the character of Job :

...une folie prolongée, et soutenue à travers des scènes de sang et de carnage, est quelque chose de si affligeant, disons mieux, de si rebutant, que l'attention s'attache avec peine à cette malheureuse création du rôle de Job Pray.

In 1839 G. DE SAINT FARGEAU's *Revue des Romans* (8) praises the vivid and impartial description of historical events and some of the « Radcliffian » scenes connected with the machinations of Mrs. Lechmere :

(7) Cf. p. 352.

(8) Cf. vol. 1, p. 227-28.

La partie purement historique, écrite par une main impartiale, attache par les peintures des commencements de cette guerre, où les enfants de la même patrie se retrouvèrent tout à coup deux peuples en champ clos, prêts à vider une sanglante querelle... Il peint avec vivacité ces petites escarmouches qui donnèrent goût à la guerre, et montrèrent, par de terribles suites, combien est enivrante la première effusion de sang.

Le roman roule presque tout entier sur les crimes d'une vieille femme, dont la mort termine un drame bien noir, où l'on trouve quelques scènes énergiques du genre d'Anne Radcliffe !

Two years later, CHARLES ROMÉY (9) includes Lionel Lincoln among those novels through which Cooper has succeeded in making his readers acquainted not only with the history but also with the « local colour » of the various American states :

Dans les *Pionniers*, dans le *Dernier des Mohicans*, dans *Lionel Lincoln*, vous retrouverez non-seulement l'histoire, mais encore la physionomie moderne ou primitive, selon l'époque choisie par le romancier, des Etats dont se compose aujourd'hui l'Union américaine.

Finally, in 1844, LOUIS DE LOMÉNIE (10) hardly mentions Lionel Lincoln, which, in his opinion, cannot be placed — any more than the *Spy* — in the front rank of Cooper's novels.

(9) In his introduction to *Mercédès de Castille*.

(10) Cf. *Galerie des contemporains illustres*, vol. 8. p. 11.

Conclusion

That Lionel Lincoln proved a comparative — though not an absolute — failure, is clearly indicated by the scarcity of American comments at the time of its publication, and by the generally lukewarm appreciations of the English and French periodicals of that date.

The silence of American reviewers in 1825 is compensated by the capital criticisms which were published, after Cooper's death, by his daughter and by his first biographer. In England, on the contrary, we note that, as early as 1832, the appearance of Lionel Lincoln in Colburn's *Standard Novels* passed almost unnoticed, while, in France, no elaborate criticisms are to be found after 1827.

As in the case of the *Spy*, most English reviewers did not allow national prejudices to interfere with their appreciation of Cooper's work, and the *British Critic* (1826) even went so far as to praise the author's broad-minded treatment of his subject. *The Literary Gazette* it is true, was an exception of no small significance (E. 1825). On the American side, the choice of a loyalist hero, and the use of a maniac as a leading revolutionary character, do not seem to have given rise to unfavourable comments. In France, however, F. A. S. considered both these devices as most unfortunate blunders on the part of a republican author.

The comparative failure of the novel is ascribed to a number of reasons. « It was strictly an American Historical Novel, a class of which none ever succeeded », Cooper himself writes in 1842, but, in 1861, S. F. C. tells us that her father's earnest republicanism prevented him from taking sufficient

interest in a loyalist hero. LOUNSBURY, on the other hand, considers that Cooper's mistake was to select a mysterious tale of sin and remorse, and to lay the scene in a clime uncongenial to his genius — a theory which is partly adopted by CARL VAN DOREN and F.-L. PATTEE.

English and French attempts at explanation are less numerous, but it should be remembered that the *Monthly Critical Gazette* (E. 1825) holds the imitation of a « bad model » — Scott's romances — as responsible for Cooper's lack of success, while E. D., in the *Paris Globe* (1825), is of opinion that the scene should have been laid outside Boston, among the revolutionists.

Cooper's *descriptive powers* — particularly in the historical and military parts — are willingly recognized by the critics of the three nations. The snowstorm, Job's death, and a few Radcliffian scenes are also singled out by isolated reviewers, both British and French. Yet the *style* of the novel as a whole is only praised by E. D. in the *Globe*, while it is severely criticized by the *London Literary Gazette* (1825) and by LOUNSBURY.

Cooper's biographer is still more severe in his denunciation of the improbabilities in the *plot*, but hardly more so than the *Spirit of Literature* (E. 1830). The other critics, however, express their disapproval in milder terms. Additional defects in the plot are sometimes pointed out : it is deficient in interest (JOHN NEAL), involved (*Literary Gazette*), badly connected with the historical events (JOHN ERSKINE), Radcliffian and commonplace (E. D. in the *Globe*.)

The *characters* are all badly drawn, if we are to believe LOUNSBURY or the French critic E. D. The hero and the heroine, it is true, fail to find a single supporter, but Job and Ralph, though generally condemned by English critics, are greatly praised by GRISWOLD and S. F. C. in America, and by F. A. S (*Globe* 1827) in France. The humorous personages of Polwarth and M'Fuse, while pronounced very exaggerated by the *London Literary Gazette*, are relished by its Boston namesake (1825). The female characters are not in general to the taste of E. D. and JOHN NEAL, but Old Nab is approved of by both JOHN NEAL

and F. A. S., while the *Literary Gazette* deems it a bad copy of Madge Wildfire. Last but not least, Seth Sage, the revolutionary inn-keeper, has the good fortune to please not only the *U. S. Literary Gazette*, but JOHN NEAL in *Blackwood's*, and F. A. S. in the *Globe*.

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS

America

Both Cooper and his daughter tell us that the Last of the Mohicans proved more successful in the United States than any of its predecessors (1), and Lounsbury, by way of illustrating its « instantaneous and prodigious success, » calls attention to the fact that, two short months after its publication, it became necessary to stereotype it (2).

These statements seem to be contradicted by a letter from Cooper's publishers, dated April 23, 1827: « the sale of the *Mohicans* has not been so great as we anticipated. We certainly have not made sixpence by it, as yet. » (3). But another letter from the same publishers shows that their expectations must have been rather too sanguine, since it proves that they had disposed of the whole of a first edition of 5,000 copies and of 400 additional copies in about a year's time (4).

At any rate, Cooper's declarations are confirmed by the *United States Literary Gazette* for May 1st, 1826 and supported besides by the tone of other contemporary reviews of his work.

This does not mean, however, that the American critics refused to see any grave defect in Cooper's first Indian novel. *The New York Review* for March 1826 (5), after a most flattering

(1) Cf. *Corresp.* p. 96 (a letter of Cooper to his English publisher, February 1826) and *Pages* p. 129.

(2) Cf. p. 52.

(3) Cf. *Corresp.* p. 129. These publishers were Carey and Lea of Philadelphia, with whom Cooper had made arrangements after the death of Charles Wiley.

(4) Cf. *BOYNTON*, p. 140.

(5) pp. 285-92.

passage on « the Ariosto of the North and him of the West » — i. e. Scott and Cooper — begins its appreciation of the Mohicans with a rather strong criticism of certain parts of the preface :

One word, in passing, of the preface, which, barring the beginning and the end, is the best our author has written ; inasmuch as it is useful in explaining particulars, which might otherwise confuse the mind in perusing the story. The beginning and the end are not, by any means, the most intelligible prose we have recently encountered. Our author's forte does not consist in writing prefaces, but romances ; and it were better for his fame if the former were suppressed in subsequent editions, since posterity will wonder, as much as his contemporaries do, at the drift of these enigmatical prolegomenæ.

The plot is censured for such « improbabilities » as the departure of Colonel Munro's daughters for a fort threatened with a siege ; their failure of availing themselves of the protection of the reinforcements sent to their father ; the unexplained presence of David Gamut in their party ; the no less unexpected presence of the two Mohicans in the woods ; and finally the « too miraculous » escapes of Magua.

The characters are not approved of without reservations, as is shown, for instance, in the case of the two heroines :

The difference between the sisters is finely conceived and beautifully supported throughout...

...we cannot discern how the purposes of the fiction can be helped, by the supposition that his [Duncan's] preference of her younger sister was in anywise to be ascribed to his prejudice of education against the descendants of negroes. It was natural, too, for Uncas to be more attracted by the fuller proportions and brilliant colour of the noble girl, who was ready, at any moment, to sacrifice herself for the more fragile Alice ; but this does not render a frequent, inartificial and painful allusion to an hereditary taint, at all necessary.

Major Heyward is summarily dismissed as being « as in the Waverley novels... the romance hero, though not the hero of the romance, » and Colonel Munro is considered « an encumbrance » in the scenes which follow the capture of his daughters :

Through the whole of the second volume, the bereaved Munro is an encumbrance, which the author, with all his ability, finds it a difficult task to support. When we are occasionally reminded of his presence, it is that of one who was a dead weight upon the operations of the other actors in the scene, listless and half exanimate, and alike painful to the invention of the author, and interest of the reader.

David Gamut is found effective enough, but somewhat too mechanical, like the rest of Cooper's bores :

His character is minutely drawn, and amusing ; and he is of undoubted service in carrying through the plot...

As he is the *bore* of the romance, we cannot help making a general observation about the species, in the tales of this writer, which must have struck every one. They stick too close to their own peculiarity, with a want of variety, which we do not find even in real bores ; and which is sometimes tiresome, and by no means ingenious.

Cooper is said to have « put forth his power with admirable success » in the delineation of the scout and his two Indian associates, but the constant repetition of Hawkeye's silent laugh is not to the taste of the critic :

We can find nothing to quarrel with Hawkeye about, unless it be the too frequent repetition of his « silent and heartfelt laugh ». Not but that he had a right to perform the noiseless agitation of his diaphragm, as often as he found it natural or refreshing ; but the reader does not require to be perpetually reminded of this accomplishment of the woodsman, or « gift », as he would have styled it...

The idealization of the Indian character, as personified in Uncas, does not pass unnoticed. It is however praised with much warmth :

Uncas is an Indian Apollo ; a living personification of one of those active and graceful forms, which an Indian's fancy might dream of, as bounding over the hunting grounds of his Elysium, lighter than the air he seemed to tread, with eye, and limb, and thought alike untiring. No legend of which the love of an Indian has been the theme, has ever approached in beauty the occasional references made by our author to the

respectful attachment of this young Mohican to Cora — to the delicacy with which its manifestations appeared, and to its tragic termination.

To conclude, the reviewer pays a highly flattering tribute to the essential merits of the book :

There are no scenes in modern romances which can surpass the long and agonising struggle at Glen's Falls, — the approach to the fort through the mists and besieging army — the capture of Alice and pursuit of Cora after the massacre — the escape in the canoe — the adventures in the village of the Hurons — the judgment of Tamenund, — and the last closing scene of danger and death, which ends this strange eventful history. There is a power, and a fearful interest in these descriptions, which, it needs no prophet to predict, will excite the feelings, and entrance the attention of generations that are to come long after our own. The superstitious customs of the natives are employed with admirable skill ; the writer seems to be at home in every spot trodden by the contending armies, or wandering captives and pursuers, and in the language and occupations of his characters. If he fails any where, it is in the management of his female personages ; a nice matter ; for Shakspeare before him has been accused of want of knowledge in this province of poetry. The conversations are unquestionably better sustained, throughout, than in his previous works.

Two months later, the *United States Literary Gazette* (6) begins its review of the *Mohicans* in a decidedly favourable, but somewhat patronizing tone :

The *Last of the Mohicans* has probably been more generally popular than any of the preceding productions of its author. Even those who have not hitherto been his admirers, acknowledge, that they have read this work with a strong interest. In many respects, it exhibits an improvement upon those which have gone before. It is superior to them in point of literary execution. It is more like the offspring of a practised writer. His style is free from many of those imperfections, which have formerly been pointed out as existing in it. It is

(6) Cf. May 1st, 1826, pp. 87-94.

more chaste and manly, though still susceptible of farther improvement.

Besides, as the reviewer points out at the end of his article, the very popularity of this novel compels him to dwell upon its faults rather than its merits, and the review consists mostly in an enumeration of the blemishes which can be detected in Cooper's new work.

The plot is criticized for its lack both of variety and unity :

The plot has little complexity or variety. There is hardly, indeed, what we call a complete connected plot at all. There is no one principal object, at which all the events are made to aim, and to which they all tend. It presents to us a certain number of personages, and exhibits them in a series of situations and under circumstances which excite a powerful interest. But they do not move forward in a very connected manner, each contributing towards the accomplishment of the business of the piece.

In addition the author, after having taxed probability to the utmost in the course of the novel, fails to give the reader the happy ending which he has been led to expect all along :

What makes this matter the more provoking is, that the author, after having thus exercised our credulity through the whole piece, and saved his *dramatis personæ* through fire, wood, and water so many times, should, in the conclusion, wantonly sacrifice two of them in whom we felt the chief interest ; at a period too, when they were upon the eve of final success, and when the dangers surrounding them were not nearly equal to those from which they had been repeatedly rescued.

This brings us to the catastrophe, with which we are by no means satisfied. We are in general disposed to have works of fiction terminate happily. We like a good wedding or two, to set all right. Still we know that this cannot always happen in real life, and that, for the sake of variety, as well as probability, the dark side must be sometimes turned towards us in fiction. But we had reason to believe that Cora and Uncas were preserved through so many dangers for some good end. Every event as we go along points to a favourable termination, when just at the winding up, the design seems to be capriciously reversed, and these two unfortunate persons are most

summarily and unnecessarily disposed of. The vessel, having braved all the dangers of her voyage, sinks as she is floating into smooth water. We are aware indeed of one objection to this disposition of the catastrophe, in the passion of Uncas for Cora, and of Cora, as we conclude, for the major ; but this is a part of the business that might with ease have been differently arranged. Uncas would have made a good match for Cora, particularly as she had a little of the blood of a darker race in her veins, — and still more, as this sort of arrangement is coming into fashion, in real life, as well as in fiction.

But the main objection is, that this termination does not harmonize with the general strain and spirit of the preceding part of the work. Now we hold it to be a fundamental law in the construction of a narrative, that the catastrophe is to correspond to and be the natural result of the preceding events. It is to be of a piece with what has gone before. It is not to be brought about by an accidental concurrence of circumstances at the conclusion, unless that accident be necessary to make it correspond to the general strain and spirit of the composition, as in *King Lear* and *Hamlet*. In short the catastrophe should correspond to the state of mind into which we have been brought by the tenor of the preceding part of the work.

With regard to the characters, the critic cannot but profess a degree of admiration for Hawkeye, but he objects to his silent laugh :

Nathaniel Bumppo, is by far the best drawn, as well as the most important person of the whole. It is true that he is only a second edition of Leather-stocking in the *Pioneers*, and he is by many supposed to represent the same person at an earlier period of his life. But it is no small merit, to have taken up the same character and carried it through a second novel, with complete success. We would gladly travel over a third in his company ; only remarking in the mean time, that he has some habits which might well be corrected before another appearance. He might in future be taught to laugh like other people, for of his own peculiar « silent, heartfelt manner », most readers must have been, we think, as tired as we were.

The delineation of the Indian character is accounted « successful », though not so perfect as one could wish :

The representation given of the Indian character, is probably, as far as it goes, accurate ; it is certainly interesting. We should have preferred to see more of it in the social and domestic state, instead of being introduced to a few wandering and solitary individuals. Still it seems as successful as any which has been attempted, and is apparently the fruit of much pains and considerable attention to the subject. One thing, however, is carried somewhat too far, and occupies too much time, the trail hunting. With due deference to the better judgment of our author, we must venture to express our incredulity with regard to some of the wonders performed by Hawk-eye and his Indian friends. Had we been barely told of their results, it might have passed off very well. But when we come down to a minute detail of the particular methods employed, signs observed and processes of reasoning entered into by the savages, our belief is staggered. Here is a great want of shrewdness on the part of the writer. As long as we merely look on and perceive that the savage, by some means peculiar to himself, but inscrutable to us, is able to follow in the track of his flying foes, and, as if by intuition, to determine their number, sex, and age, there is something obscure and mysterious in the faculties which has an imposing effect. But when he is shown to us, squatting down among bushes and dried leaves, measuring footsteps, discussing the length of this heel and that toe, the charm is lost. It is like surveying the beauties of a grand painting through a microscope. The whole poetry of this faculty of the Indian is annihilated.

The heroines are also approved of, but the hero, Major Heyward, and above all David Gamut and Colonel Munro, meet with severe treatment at the reviewer's hands :

The heroines are as well set forth, as such persons generally are ; Cora, perhaps, a little better. But then she has the best part to play. It is easier to describe equally well an efficient, than an inefficient character. Duncan Heyward, or the major, is the hero, which is saying perhaps all that can well be said. That he was a major, was his misfortune, but it is surely Mr. Cooper's fault ; who certainly has a most unaccountable propensity, in « these weak piping times of peace, » for bemajoring and be-captaining his heroes. David Gamut is a bore in every sense of the word. Invested with that official situation of bore, which is a necessary appendage of the modern novel, as the fool was of ancient royal courts, he is also a bore in his own proper person. His introduction into

a story like this, is one of the strangest conceits that ever entered into the head of a romance writer. He is not only in himself, a caricature, an absolute monster of his species, even admitting such a species to exist ; but he is totally out of place ; there is nothing for him to do, either in amusing the reader or advancing the plot. He is so much dead capital on the author's hands, and should have been reserved for some occasion on which he would at least have brought lawful interest.

Another individual, Colonel Munroe, fails sadly. His character, as exhibited in the first volume, is well sustained, and excites a good deal of sympathy. Such a change from vigor and spirit to absolute dotage in so short a period, is totally unnatural.

The conclusion, however, in addition to explaining the fault-finding attitude of the reviewer, contains some very flattering comments on the novel as a whole :

There are many other circumstances in this work which render it very open to criticism, but we do not wish to dwell too much upon its faults. The notice now taken of them does not proceed from any want of sensibility to its beauties ; but it seems to be more important, in speaking of a book of this kind, so popular and so universally read, that its faults rather than its merits should be enlarged upon. The majority of readers are fully able to appreciate the latter themselves, but are not so likely to consider the former...

This we say by way of apology, if any apology be indeed necessary, for the sort of notice taken of *The Last of the Mohicans*. Upon the whole we should think it superior to any of the family, and there are parts of it which would do honour to almost any pen.

In the *North American* for July (7), W. H. GARDINER also concludes his review of the *Mohicans* by an explanation of his insistence on the author's faults :

The truth is, we have concerned ourselves chiefly to notice our author's faults, because Mr. Cooper is already too far advanced to stand in need of our praise ; and we desire, not

(7) Cf. pp. 150-97. This article is generally attributed to W. H. GARDINER, who had previously reviewed the *Spy*.

only that the public taste should be correct on the subject of our native literature, but also, if it be possible, and any suggestion of ours can effect it, to see something from this pen free from the numerous defects which deform its present productions, and every way worthy of the great powers and far spread fame of the American novelist.

These defects are said to lie primarily in the plot, the « improbabilities » of which are wittily — if not always kindly — commented upon :

The interest of the piece turns upon the fortunes of two young ladies, the daughters of... Colonel Monroe, the Commandant of Fort William Henry. The young ladies, at the drawing of the curtain, are found (we wonder wherefore) stationed at Fort Edward, the head quarters of General Webb ; but no sooner do they hear of the approach of Montcalm and his savages, than they set out (wherefore, we wonder yet more) to join their father at his more advanced and dangerous post. As there was no incessant patrol of regulars moving between the two forts, like that established on the highway between Schenectady and Albany, and William Henry was just upon the point of being invested by a vastly superior force of French and Indian arms, nothing could be more opportune than the conjuncture of time, place, and circumstance for this journey, which we take to be intended for nothing more than an interesting little tribute of filial affection. A small reinforcement, however, is despatched by General Webb ; and this pursues its way through the forest, with all the glorious pomp and circumstance of war, along the broader and more beaten track. The ladies, on the other hand, prefer to journey by themselves in a bypath, with no larger escort than their friend Major Heyward, of the Royal Americans, and an Indian runner for their guide, who comes recommended by the circumstance of his having lately experienced a wholesome castigation at the order of their father, for being found drunk within his lines. The reason assigned by Major Heyward for this sagacious choice of roads, was, that parties of hostile Indians would be sure to hover about the army on the lookout for straggling scalps. The servants of his party, however, are required to follow the march of the troops. We suppose the reason of this was, that the savages might not be wholly disappointed of their game ; or perhaps it was a *ruse de guerre* to divert their attention. After this admirable disposition of forces, the Major's party is increased, we can hardly say strengthened, by the

accession of David Gamut, a Connecticut singing master, whose motive for such a journey at such a time, is rather more inexplicable and quite as little explained, as is that of the young ladies ; especially since the man of song professes himself not to be a man of war, and is provided with no better instrument of defence than his « tooting we'pon », commonly called a pitchpipe. Without undertaking to recount minutely the adventures of this hopeful expedition, it is enough for the reader to know, that their guide, as might have been expected, proves treacherous ; that the party is captured by the hostile Indians, but rescued again by a white hunter and two friendly Mohicans, who are found loitering about the woods for the express purpose of being at hand in case any distressed party should want them. By their aid the errant damsels finally make their way through the French lines, enveloped in such a mist as carried Æneas incognito into the Tyrian capital ; whereby they happily reach Fort William Henry in excellent time to be provided for in the articles of capitulation. The massacre follows. But the young ladies, instead of being scalped, are again carried off by the Indians, again found after a long search by their friends, and once more on the point of being rescued ; but, alas ! one of them is unfortunately tomahawked instead ; the other lives to bestow her hand on Major Heyward as a reward for his signal services to the family, and make, what is commonly called, a happy termination.

This is the simple outline of the plot ; and we cannot forbear to express our astonishment, that our author, who has exhibited so much ingenuity and invention in the interior conduct of the piece, should have suffered its claim to regard as a « narrative » to rest on such a wretchedly improbable foundation.

Cooper's gifts as a story-teller are none the less duly recognized :

But *il n'est que le premier pas qui coute*, and after stretching our credulity far enough to overcome the first startling absurdity of such a tour as our author has here imagined, and having actually set forth in company with a Major of the Royal Americans, like a knight of the Holy Land with *two* distressed damsels under his wing, in search of all possible adventure, we enter instantly upon a continuous scene of intense and breathless interest ; there is no break, no pause, no abiding place of rest ; but we are urged incessantly forward by an irresistible power, hurrying on to the final catastrophe

through forests and cataracts, over lakes and mountains, by forts and ambushments, in the midst of bullets and bayonets, tomahawks and scalping knives, with the crack of « *la longue carabine*, » or the yell of a dying Indian, forever ringing in our ears ; until we are heartily glad to draw a long breath at the end of the volume.

In his examination of the characters, Gardiner proceeds from the most objectionable to those he deems least so, beginning with the luckless singing master :

Our author has uniformly followed the example of the great lord and master of modern romance, in endeavoring to relieve his reader from the more painful and serious emotions of the tale by introducing some uncouth, ungainly, and unnatural being, bearing no imaginary likeness to anything on the earth or under it, merely to flounder through a saraband for the amusement of the spectators, playing over the same awkward and extravagant gambols again and again, and uttering forever the same stupid jest in season and out of season, until our very hearts are expected to ache with delight. This being is and does nothing more than the queen's dwarf and the king's jester were wont to be and do of old ; which concomitants of royalty, like many more important jewels of prerogative, have long since ceased from the face of the earth, and become extinguished in the progress of civilization... we do not think our author has usually been happy in this order of creation ; and as for the present instance, we can truly say, that so far from having moved our merriment in the slightest degree, the unfortunate David Gamut never appears without wrapping us in a feeling of profound melancholy, and bring on a fit of lugubrious reflection. He is, beyond comparison, the most stupid, senseless, useless, and unmeaning monster we remember ever to have met with. He does nothing towards the conduct of the piece, which could not have been better done without him ; and performs no feat in the world for our amusement, save uplifting a New England psalm whenever he, or any one else, is in danger of being scalped.

The heroines are criticized, not only on account of the negro blood of Cora, but above all because they are said to lack the true refinement of well-bred ladies :

There is no task of the novel writer more difficult, we suppose, than that of delineating a good female character ; at least the frequency of the failure seems to justify this presumption... Certain it is, that the heroine is commonly the least agreeable article in a good novel, and quite intolerable in a bad one. Scott himself has but seldom succeeded ; our author, we think, never. In the present case, we are free to confess, that so far as Cora is concerned, our judgments, like Major Heyward's, may be somewhat biassed. We mean no offence whatever to the colored population of the United States ; on the contrary, we have a great esteem for them in certain situations ; and we acknowledge it to be a vile and abominable prejudice ; but still we have (and we cannot help it) a particular dislike to the richness of the negro blood in a heroine. But supposing this extraordinary and superfluous blemish wiped out, what is there in the character either of Cora or of Alice, which adds to the interest of the piece ? We are deeply interested in certain scenes of peril, which they encounter ; but we are so simply because of the character of the perils themselves... Does the author ask, why we are neither satisfied with the feminine timidity of Alice, nor with the proud bearing of the ardent and noble minded Cora ? We answer, chiefly for the same reason, that we were dissatisfied equally with Isabella Singleton and Frances Wharton, or with Katharine Plowden and Cecilia Howard ; for the same reason, that we are now dissatisfied with all the heroines of the *Pioneers* and of *Lionel Lincoln* ; it is, that they are all miserably deficient in the grace and ease, gentility of deportment, true delicacy, and unaffected refinement, which properly belong to the sphere of life in which they are designed to move ; or in other words, because no one of them exhibits, according to our conceptions, what we suppose each of them is designed to exhibit, the true notion of a wellbred lady.

Gardiner adds that Cooper's gentlemen are not drawn with greater success, and he quotes part of the dialogue in the caves as an instance of the author's failure in his attempts to paint the higher classes of society :

Nor ought we to confine our remarks now, more than formerly, to the female characters, in regard to this sort of defect. It belongs rather to the high life of either sex ; and, as it would in the intercourse of real life, appears most conspicuous in their mutual conversation...

« There are evils even worse than death, » said Duncan, speaking hoarsely, and as if fretful at her importunity, « but which the presence of one who would die in your behalf may avert. »

« Cora instantly ceased her intreaties, and veiling her face in her shawl, drew the nearly insensible Alice after her into the deepest recess of the inner cavern. »

The whole of this dialogue is stiff and inelegant ; but the latter allusion, if we do not mistake it, is such as never would have been made by a gentleman of high breeding to refined young women, however circumstanced ; besides, it was an unnecessary and cruel augmentation of the misery of their situation.

In addition Major Heyward is deemed too insignificant a character, while Colonel Munro's « imbecility » in the second part of the novel is severely censured :

The other members of civilized society, who figure in this work, have very little that entitles them to comment. Major Heyward, of the Royal Americans, is a warm blooded Southern planter, who fights and loves with more valor than discretion, and informs Colonel Munro that more than half the guns of the Fort are *burst*ed. The Colonel himself was designed for a venerable and gallant Scotch officer, who had grown very grey and very proud in his Majesty's service ; but after the capture of the Fort and the loss of his daughters, he turns out, by mistake, to be a drivelling old dotard, whom our author ought to have had good sense enough to put out of the way, whether history agrees to it or not. At any rate, we cannot imagine his motive in dragging the old gentleman through a whole volume of imaginary adventure in a state of perfect imbecility.

The discussion of Cooper's Indians — considering the early date of the article (8) — is a model of impartial and well-informed criticism. Cooper's superiority over his predecessors — notwithstanding his idealization of the Indian character — together with the probable cause of this idealization, are dealt with in masterly fashion :

(8) The Heckewelder Controversy had been started by Governor Cass in the January number of the *North American Review*. Cf. our main thesis, chap. XI, p. 570.

The main design of this work, however, is manifestly to exhibit the characteristics of savage rather than civilized life, as they exist or once existed in the wilds of North America. The Aborigines of our soil constitute the great machinery of the piece, and the few civilized whites, who appear to take an active part in the plot, are in fact introduced merely as objects on whom the Indians may operate to advantage. We have long since looked upon the character of the North American savage as one admirably calculated to form an engine of great power in the hands of some ingenious master of romance, who had a true notion of this part of his subject ; and the success with which it has been managed by Mr. Cooper in the present work, is a striking example of its effect. Beings that went by this name, and were in fact meant to represent North American Indians, have acted their parts, more or less important, in the world of fiction, almost ever since the discovery that such creatures existed. But the representation has commonly borne no greater similitude to the red warrior of the woods, than it has to a chieftain of Timbuctoo, or the solitary hero of the moon. They have not been copies from nature ; but mere creations of the poet's brain, the half formed dreams of a disturbed imagination. Mr. Cooper's Indians are somewhat of the visionary order too ; but then he has dreamed a more consistent dream upon the subject than most of his predecessors, and has interwoven with his vision more of what really belongs to the aboriginal character than any other writer of poetry or romance. The great difficulty is that which we suggested, by the way, in a late article on this interesting subject ; namely, that he has relied exclusively upon the narrations of the enthusiastic and visionary Heckewelder, whose work is a mere eulogium upon the virtues of his favorite tribe, and contains, mixed with many interesting facts, a world of pure imagination. So far as things have fallen under his own daily observation, the account of an old man who had spent a long life among the people whose manners and usages he attempts to describe, is doubtless valuable, and to be received *cum grano salis* only by reason of his enthusiastic temperament, and ardent prejudices in favor of his adopted children ; but beyond this, we think, it has been pretty clearly demonstrated, that he is not entitled to belief, being himself the victim of an easy credulity. It is therefore with great regret, that we have seen his wild traditions adopted by an author so generally read, and so deservedly popular, for the sober voice of history, and the whole fable of the superior virtues and glories of the Lenni Lenape, incorporated into this tale, and made the basis of its Indian mythology, for such it must be called. This would

be of trifling moment, perhaps, and in general not to be complained of in a work of fiction. But the extreme minuteness with which the rites and ceremonies of this singular people are described, when by no means necessary to the action of the piece, render it apparent, that the author really supposed he was doing the fashionable world some service, in familiarizing them with the manners of a race but little known. And in fact we are given plainly to understand in the preface (so far as anything certain can be learnt from one of Mr. Cooper's prefaces), that we are not to look here for « a romantic and imaginary picture of things, which never had an existence ; » but are to take the work to be « exactly what it professes to be in its title-page, a narrative. » And in this particular we protest against it, as presenting altogether a false and ideal view of the Indian character.

Uncas is naturally considered the most idealized Indian character, but his father Chingachgook and even Magua fail to satisfy the critic :

We should be glad to know, for example, in what tribe, or in what age of Indian history, such a civilized warrior as Uncas ever flourished ? Uncas is represented as falling in love with Cora at first sight. This we do not object to, as we suppose an Indian is about as likely to fall in love at first sight as a white man. But then, we apprehend, he has his own aboriginal mode of expressing the tender passion. We remember once to have had the honor of meeting a deputation of Pawnee chieftains in a fashionable drawing room. One of the Sagamores, intoxicated partly with beauty and partly with rum, approached a young belle, and raising both his hands, exclaimed, « Oh ! » (or it might have been Hugh !) « pretty ! » This we took, at the time, to be the beginning of an Indian courtship ; though great doubts were entertained whether the admiration of the savage had been thus excited by the beauty of the lady, or the brilliancy of her necklace. Now no flower of ancient chivalry was ever possessed of more respectful devotion to his lady love than Uncas ; no modern carpet knight ever expressed his sublimated affection by more delicate and refined attentions. At one time he tenders to Cora all those little offices, which, according to the customs of civilized man alone, are not menial because a voluntary homage to the weak ; but which, according to the customs of the Indian, are the proper tribute which the squaw is bound to render the accomplished warrior, who honors her with a place in his

wigwam. At another time, instead of scalping the dead, whom he had conquered in battle, he leaves it to his father to gather all the trophies of the field, and flies, « *with instinctive delicacy*, accompanied by Heyward, to the assistance of the sisters, and quickly releasing Alice, placed her in the open arms of Cora. » The instinctive delicacy of an Indian is romantic enough, to be sure ; but it will not serve for « narrative. »

Chingachgook, the father of Uncas, and at his death the last of the Mohicans, is drawn far nearer to the life ; though even he smacks a little too much of civilization. Magua, or Le Renard Subtil, as he was styled by the French, is, on the other hand, one of those licensed instruments of romance, which belong rather to the diabolical orders of creation, than to any tribe of the human species, savage or civilized. He is the grand agent of mischief in the plot ; a well conceived and well sustained, though somewhat exaggerated character.

Hawkeye, however, the last character on the list, is accounted true to life and praised in the warmest terms :

But it is time to advert to the real hero of the piece. Nathaniel Bumppo, called by the Delawares Hawkeye, from his quick and accurate sight, was a provincialist, who from early life had associated with the Indians as a hunter, and become attached to them, or at least to the tribe of the Mohicans, and their wandering mode of life. At the time our author takes him up, he had been for some years employed as a scout and partisan warrior in the Canadian wars...

When this course of life was pursued year after year, it is not surprising that many a white man should have partially adopted the habits and manners of his red associates, and become averse to the restraints of civilized life. Similar instances, though rare, may be found even at the present day. Who has not heard of the white hunter and warrior, famous in his day, who had settled himself down in some distant and secluded spot to pass the remnant of his life, as he imagined, far from the encroachments of civilization ? But after a few years a settlement of whites is formed in his vicinity, and he becomes so much annoyed by this interruption of his repose, that he voluntarily abandons his habitation, and plunges into the wilderness anew.

To the suggestions of some such fact, we probably owe the character of the scout, a bold and original conception, which we think, upon the whole, the best piece of invention our author has ever produced ; one, we may say, which

deserves to be ranked in the first class of the creations of genius... He has, moreover, a great deal of natural poetry in him, without being in the least aware of it ; and some of the most poetical sketches of wild scenery, which our author has given, seem to fall by accident from the lips of the scout.

There follows a minute analysis of the various episodes, in the course of which Gardiner does not grudge Cooper the tribute of his sincere admiration, although he does not fail to point out occasional flaws.

The capture of the party at Glenn's Falls, for instance, is appreciated as follows :

The whole of this bustling scene is described with our author's usual vivacity and force. It is among the most exciting in the book, and affords a fair sample of the kind of interest which is sustained throughout, and of the means by which it is created. At the same time, the description is by no means free from confusion. We must confess, that after several readings, we have derived from it but a dark idea of the topography of Glenn's Falls, and of the structure of its curious cavern.

The fight between Magua and Chingachgook elicits unfavourable as well as favourable comments :

This escape of Magua savours perhaps too much of the miraculous ; and the expressions, intended to denote energy of action, are sometimes mere hyperbole ; as where Uncas is made « to bound from his footsteps, appearing for an instant darting through the air, » and then « *descending in a ball upon the chest of his enemy, driving him many yards from the spot headlong and prostrate.* » But upon the whole, the scene is described with so much spirit and effect, that we are half inclined to extract it. It is one of the best of a kind in which our author excels.

During the siege of Fort William Henry, Cooper's imitation of Shakespeare's Frenchified dialogues is not deemed particularly happy :

If it is necessary to write French for the Frenchmen, why, when the natives hold a talk, does not the author give us a

little Indian also ? And why does he not carry it out and write the whole of a French conversation in French, instead of interlarding their language with such broken patches as, « Your commandant is a brave man ; *mais, monsieur*, is it not time to take more counsel of humanity ? » « *Ces messieurs là* are most formidable when baffled. » « *Eh bien, monsieur !* shall we speak of the terms of the surrender ? » Why translate a part for the speaker, and not the whole ? Shakspeare is quite a pattern of a writer in some things ; but we never liked his scenes in bad French ; and think this mingling of tongues, unless in the way of ordinary quotation, or for the sake of introducing some solitary characteristic expression, like the *Qui vive* ? of the sentinel is, to say the least of it, in very bad taste.

Cooper's gift of exciting horror is praised in connection with the murder of the French sentry, but strongly objected to in the scene where the unfortunate colt is put to death :

The manner in which this dark deed is accomplished is, in truth, highly characteristic of the Indian. It is a natural, though shocking incident, and told with effect. It bears a similar character, if not nearly equal in effect, to the hanging of the « skinner » in the Spy, or the drowning of Dillon in the Pilot. The feeling of unmingled horror which it creates, is a species of excitement to which our author is somewhat too fond of resorting ; well knowing, that he manages it with great power. It is a power, however, which should be cautiously used ; for horror is an emotion, which it does not require the highest order of talent to raise, and one which borders too nearly upon disgust, to be often employed with success... For example, David Gamut is made to ride a long switchtailed mare, with a colt trotting by her side. Now the colt, though quite unnecessary, is not an unnatural appendage to the mare, and therefore in itself not to be quarrelled with. But by and by, when we arrive at Glenn's, the scout deeming it important to get rid of everything which might endanger discovery, and could not facilitate escape, the colt is put to death, and we have a detailed account of the *modus operandi*, so as to make as much of a horror out of it as the subject would bear. Here then it becomes quite apparent, that this unfortunate colt was introduced to the reader at the beginning of the book, and made to trot through four or five chapters, for no other purpose than to have its throat cut at last, under circumstances calcu-

lated to create a sensation. We consider this a species of cruelty to brute beasts, which ought to be noticed by the proper authorities.

Gardiner, however, recognizes that Cooper has not unduly emphasized the scenes of horror which follow the capture of Fort William Henry :

The massacre is given with probable conformity to the historical fact, and not minutely or shockingly detailed ; in truth, less is made of this historical horror than we had anticipated ; but the battle field, as seen and searched on the third day after the event, by the scout and his red associates, with Heyward, and Munro in quest of his lost daughters, is a powerful passage ; and the reflections of Hawkeye on the scene, are in admirable keeping.

With regard to the pursuit of the Indian ravishers, the *North American* differs entirely from the *United States Literary Gazette*. It approves of the minute description of the process by which the Indians can follow a trail, but objects to the miracles performed in this line by Chingachgook and his son :

Although the pursuit is in general admirably managed, yet we cannot help thinking our author has occasionally exaggerated Indian ingenuity, and taxed white credulity a little too far. That an Indian should be able to follow up a forest trail continuously from one end to the other, we can readily conceive ; but that after once leaving it, and paddling forty miles over a lake, he should be able to strike it again within a short distance from his landing place, with no better guide than a surmise of the general direction of the flight, and some knowledge of the localities, seems to us to approach the marvellous. We do not know, that it is going beyond nature to make Uncas divert the course of a rivulet for the purpose of inspecting its bottom, where the trail seems otherwise to have come to a premature end ; but is it not somewhat too ingenious to suppose, that the flying Indians should not only march in the stream, so as to conceal their track, but also, as if anticipating that the course of the rivulet *might* be turned, and its bottom thus be exposed, should tread in each other's footsteps with such admirable accuracy, and that under water too, as to leave but the trace of a single man ?

Many scenes within and without the Huron village are also condemned as even more exaggerated and improbable :

These scenes we think are, upon the whole, the most exceptionable in the book. From the time we come in sight of the « beaver settlement, » until we make our final exit from the Huron village, we find a series of strange mistakes, extravagant impostures, and improbable situations, with which we are hardly carried along. We can agree to Heyward's supposing the huts of the beavers at a little distance to be human habitations, but cannot so readily consent to his taking the beavers themselves for men running on all fours ! And we cannot but be surprised, that the remarkable and ungainly proportions of David should be so completely disguised by a little paint and an odd dress, as to cheat the senses of the keen eyed scout into a momentary belief, that it was a real Indian. We are next called upon to admit, that Heyward is suddenly transformed into a Canadian physician and juggler, with such entire success, as to elude the sagacity of Magua and others of the tribe to whom he was personally known ; and that he was foolhardy enough to attempt this dangerous disguise with the conviction staring him in the face, that when called upon to exhibit a specimen of his skill, he must infallibly betray equal and entire ignorance of the black and of the healing arts... Yet we can more readily suppose all this, than that the scout should personify the bear with such consummate address, as to stagger the shrewd Magua with a doubt, whether it were not the shaggy monster himself. We are, moreover, quite as much at a loss to imagine the construction of the cave, wherein Alice and the sick woman are concealed, with its long galleries, numerous partitions, and secret trap doors, as we were to form a tolerable idea of the cavern at Glenn's.

But the most beautiful absurdity is yet to come. When Alice is discovered by the scout, and the passage to her place of concealment is pointed out to Heyward, all burning with impatience as he is to rescue the fair captive from her thralldom, what think you the gallant Major does in the extremity of his ardor ? He rushes, not to the arms of his mistress, but to a little stream of water, which trickled out of the rock, *in order to wash off his paint !* He is thus enabled to appear « in the fine and polished lineaments with which he had been gifted by nature, » and seizes the delicious opportunity to make tender protestations of his passion and his hopes, instead of concerting some feasible plan of escape, and attempting it without delay. Perhaps, however, this is not much out of character.

We always suspected the Major, from the time we first found him exercising his discretion in the choice of a route to William Henry, of being somewhat « visited in his intellects ; » and all his subsequent conduct only serves to confirm the opinion. We are not much better satisfied with the manner in which the escape of Uncas is managed. David is required to do, little enough to be sure, but yet somewhat more than we esteem him competent to execute ; and we had rather trust the scout for a passable growl in his bearskin, than for such an imitation of the sweet melody of David, as to deceive even the untutored senses of a savage. What had become of that instinctive sagacity approaching almost to inspiration, which our author's natives were wont to have ? Where were the quick eyes, where were the sharp ears of the Hurons, that so many and so gross impositions were practised upon them with impunity by red skins and white ?

But, side by side with these scenes, there are others which one cannot but admire :

We would not be understood, however, as condemning *in toto* this portion of the work. On the contrary, we find much to admire. The return of the successful war party with the scalps of the enemies they had slain, and Uncas a prisoner in their hands ; their triumphant reception ; the flight and surrender of Uncas ; the execution of the cowardly Huron ; the sudden return of Magua from the hunt ; his brief interview with Uncas ; the effect of his inflammatory eloquence upon the tribe ; and the scene in which he is released from his confinement in the cave, and receives intelligence of the escape of Uncas, and communicates to his warriors the impostures of « La Longue Carabine, » are all conceived with power, and happily executed.

The end of the novel, though not exempt from blemishes, appeals particularly to Gardiner :

These hundred pages, from the entrance of Magua into the village of the Delawares to the end of the tale, are wrought in part with a more delicate and in part with a bolder hand than any in the book. They possess unusual interest and much excellence of execution. The appearance of the venerable Tame-nund, the patriarch of his tribe, « an old, old man, whose locks were white as snow, » borne down with the weight of years, and loaded with the emblems of the achievements and

renown of days long gone by, is a highly imposing and poetical vision. His feeble and dreamy attention to the scene before him, his perpetual recurrence to the events of his youth, and utter oblivion of those of yesterday, his deep rooted and bitter prejudices against the pale faces, from whose arrival he dates the ruin of his race, are all perfectly natural ; and his general demeanor during the examination of the prisoners is entirely consistent with his years and his honors. The several appeals of Magua, and Cora, and Uncas to the justice and magnanimity of the Delawares have a good deal of appropriate eloquence, and the whole scene is admirably dramatic... The preparations for battle, and the battle itself, are given as our author usually gives scenes of that character, with much force and effect. We do not think the flight and death scene of Uncas and Cora, however, by any means the best part of it. It seems to us somewhat confused, partly owing perhaps to the hurry of the action, but chiefly to our slender acquaintance with the geography of those parts, as derived from our author's descriptions...

The funeral of Cora reminds us of a considerable defect in the story, by bringing the old Colonel again to light. After he had arrived at the end of the trail, being found wholly unfit for service, he was stowed away for safe keeping in a beaver's hut, under the guardianship of Le Gros Serpent. Thence Chingachgook is made to thrust his head out now and then, and when the fight ensues, his rifle bears its part in the destruction of the day. He does not do indeed all we had a right to expect from the Last of the Mohicans ; his glories are somewhat too easily eclipsed by the rising sun of Uncas ; but still he does enough in support of his own character to dignify his sorrows and move our respect. The Colonel, on the other hand, having travelled a long journey with no other object than to find and rescue his lost daughters, does no one thing towards the effecting of that object, but after burying himself with the beavers whilst others are fighting his battles, emerges again at last only to blubber over the grave of Cora.

Having come to the end of this long analysis of the strong and weak points of the various scenes, the reviewer concludes that the novel suffers most from an exaggerated accumulation of breathless episodes, and from an undue striving of the author after effect :

The greatest fault of this work upon the whole is a little

overdoing of the very thing which constitutes its chief excellence. The incidents are too crowded ; there are too many imminent dangers and hair breadth escapes ; far too much of the same sort of excitement ; too many startling sights, and unearthly sounds, and amazing accidents... Besides he is constantly going out of his way to show us a series of unconnected, extraordinary spectacles, and to put his actors in strange postures and unusual situations, which contribute little to the developement of their characters and nothing to the accomplishment of the plot, for the mere sake of momentary effect. An example of this is the night scene near the fort after the articles of capitulation had been signed, which were to take effect on the following day. A man wrapped in a martial cloak is seen to move at dead of night from the lodging of the French general : he passes beyond the lines of the little city of tents, and halts before the walls of the fortress. From the interview with the sentinel we discover him to be Montcalm. Presently another military figure, whom we recognise for Munro, is seen to walk out upon the rampart ; and anon a low plash is heard in the waters of the neighboring lake, and a dusky being is seen to steal *out of it*. This we know to be Magua. These several movements are got up with great solemnity and circumstance, as if something of the last importance were to be acted. The leaders of the French, the English, and the Indian forces are mysteriously brought together at midnight, and we naturally expect some great event which will forward the main action. Instead of this Magua only points his rifle at Munro, Montcalm unexpectedly seizes it, and the Indian cries « Hugh ! » Now all this is very well told, and produces a little stage effect. But *cui bono* ? The effect is too manifestly the sole motive for the scene ; and a good deal of machinery is put into operation to produce it. The Frenchman is made to break his slumbers and walk out of his marquise, and pass his sentinels and put himself to a world of trouble, « in the dead vast and middle of the night, » for no imaginable end but to stand and look at the wall. The Englishman at the same instant sallies forth from his quarters, with no particular object in view but to go and look *over* the wall ; and the malignant Magua, thirsting for murder and revenge, seizes the opportunity to steal out with his rifle, why we know not, unless because he thinks it likely the English commander will want to look over the wall about that time.

This is a species of jugglery, which we notice in the present instance, not because the instance is particularly exceptionable, but because our author is too fond of playing off

tricks merely to surprise us... It seems to be the result of a sort of aboriginal taste, which delights in finery and glitter, and provided there be a dazzling effect, cares little whether it be produced by tinsel or gold.

The very last sentences of the review making up, as we have seen, for most of the foregoing criticisms, it seems fair to conclude that Gardiner had made an effort to adopt a tone more friendly than in his criticism of the *Spy*.

About a year later, the *New York Mirror* deals with the Mohicans in a general article on Cooper's works (9), and it is interesting to note that the passing of time enables the critic to reduce to two the chief defects as well as the chief merits of the novel.

The improbabilities of the plot and the lack of variety in the episodes are the two « great defects » :

The Last of the Mohicans, though superior to the former novel [Lionel Lincoln], will not compare with either of the three preceding. It commences with a circumstance which cannot be reconciled with probability, and appears like a desperate effort of the author to bring some of his leading characters into danger, that he may display his powers in describing their perils, and his ingenuity in effecting their deliverance. Another great defect in the story is, the sameness of its complexion throughout. It is made up, from beginning to end, of an unbroken succession of forest adventures, hair-breadth escapes from the savage foe, skirmishes, captures, and recaptures. The sympathy first excited is powerful, but the unvaried character of the incidents at length becomes actually fatiguing, and the cheerless adventures of the tale are almost as tiresome to the reader as we may suppose they were to the actual sufferers. In some passages, too, probability is grievously outraged, especially where the disguise of the bear is introduced, and two or three of the characters, by turns, play their pranks in the form of that ferocious animal. This is a specimen of the melo-dramatic machinery which Mr. Cooper resorts to in very pressing emergencies, when he finds it difficult to continue the thread of the narrative in a consistent manner. No author of fertile invention can be excused for making use of this miserable resource.

(9) August 11, 1827, Cf. p. 39.

As for the chief merits of the Mohicans, they are said to lie in the re-appearance of Leatherstocking and in the delineation of Indian character :

In other respects, the Last of the Mohicans possesses great merit. It introduces us to Leatherstocking in his younger days, and, though his character is not then so strongly marked as when age has strengthened his peculiarities, he is still a being of rare species, and must command the admiration of every reader.

In this novel the American aborigines are introduced with better effect than in any work of fiction that has ever been written. The gentle Uncas and his valiant sire, the fiend-like Magua, and the venerable patriarch of the Delawares, are perfect master-pieces of their kind : they are true sons of the forest bearing the traits of good or ill, as nature gave them ; the one neither refined nor perverted, nor the other disguised by art or education. They are immensely superior to all attempts that Chateaubriand, or any others, have made to delineate the character of the American savage.

Of course the counterpart of such unqualified praise of Cooper's Indians is to be found, at about the same time, in some of the articles carrying on the Heckewelder controversy. Yet the writers of these articles take care to distinguish between Cooper, the deluded disciple of the credulous missionary, and Cooper, the American novelist of undisputed genius.

An article which appeared in the *United States Review and Literary Gazette* for April 1827 is a typical instance of this attitude carried to extremes (10) :

One of the most popular American novelists of the day, has evidently taken his models of the savage life from Mr. Heckewelder's work, and has not scrupled to adopt some absurdities and improbabilities, in aid of the development of his plot, which would discredit a tale of the nursery ; and when we had followed the incidents of his story into the recesses of the wilderness, to the cabins of the Hurons, and the court of Temenund, we thought ourselves in any other than an Indian

(10) Cf. p. 45.

settlement. We would say of *The Last of the Mohicans*, as Byron said of *The Last of the Minstrels*

« May they be the last. »

His success in delineating the creations of his own fertile imagination, his *Leather-stocking*, and his *Hawkeye*, should persuade him to draw from his own rich and abundant resources, rather than from the ill-assorted and incongruous fictions of another's brain.

Needless to say, Governor Cass, the principal critic of Heckewelder's Indians, had too much sense to adopt such a virulent tone, and the conclusion of his comments on Cooper, in the *North American Review* for April 1828, is couched in terms worthy of himself and of his gentlemanly opponent (11) :

We have no disposition to pursue this subject. We have derived too much pleasure from these works, and feel too deep an interest in the reputation of the author, to find the task of pointing out his errors an agreeable one. Where he has drawn from his own abundant resources, he has been eminently successful, but in his delineations of character, and in those touches of nature which form the distinctive traits of different people, he has failed. His *Uncas*, and his *Pawnee Hardheart*, for they are both of the same family, have no living prototype in our forests. They may wear leggins and moccasins, and be wrapped in a blanket or a buffalo skin, but they are civilized men, and not Indians. They have the never failing impress of civilization in the dignity of their sentiments, and in the whole spirit of their conduct and conversation. They are the Indians of Mr. Heckewelder, and not the fierce and crafty warriors and hunters, that roam through our forests.

With regard to literary criticism proper, it goes without saying that appreciations of the *Mohicans* as a whole, or allusions to certain of its features, are to be met with in practically all subsequent articles on Cooper's work. Many of these appreciations or allusions, however, are too tame for quotation.

An exception should first be made in favour of a few lines on *Cora and Alice*, included in an article on *France* published by F. BOWEN in the *North American* for January 1838 :

(11) Cf. p. 376.

Mr. Cooper's most decided failure is in the exhibition of his female personages. The women in his novels are utterly characterless and insipid. There is no variety, no grace, no life in them. We can hardly account for this grand defect. Our author is evidently no misogynist ; for there are passages, which betray a deep sense of the loveliness and excellence of woman's character. But the tenderness of her spirit, the depth, and strength, and purity of her affections, her real power, her influence over the course and issue of events, — these are things that our author either does not understand, or cannot adequately set forth. Female characters are introduced, as beings *for* whom something is to be done, but who themselves do nothing, and say nothing — to the purpose. They are constantly in the way, constantly in difficulties, — the cause of exertion in others, but never effecting any thing for themselves. They form part of the machinery for entangling the plot, but never for unravelling it. Thus, in « *The Last of the Mohicans*, » the capture of Cora and Alice by the savages, is the leading incident, and creates all the business of the story. But the two captives themselves do nothing, they only suffer. Hence, they are nearly as stupid as the redoubtable Major, with whom they are both in love. All the reader's sympathy is enlisted for Uncas and Hawk-eye (12).

Again we cannot but quote the tribute paid to Cooper, as a painter of the American Indians, by his worthy rival in that field, W. G. SIMMS (13) :

... he gave us the most exquisite scenes of minute artifice, as in his Indian stories, — in which the events were elaborated with a nicety and patience, reminding us of the spider at his web, that curious and complicated spinner, which may well be employed to illustrate by his own labours and ingenuity the subtle frame-work of his Indian cunning — the labyrinth of his artifice, — his wily traps and pitfalls, and indomitable perseverance. In these details of Indian art and resource, Mr. Cooper was inimitable. In his pursuits, flights, captures, — in his encounters, — cunning opposed to cunning, — man to man — the trapper and the hunter, against the red man whose life he envies and emulates, — Mr. Cooper has no superior as he has had no master.

(12) Cf. p. 8.

(13) Cf. *Views and Reviews*, 1845, pp. 218-19.

PARKMAN's opposite view of the case, in the *North American* for January 1852, is so well-known that it scarcely needs reprinting :

We do not allude to his Indian characters, which it must be granted, are for the most part either superficially or falsely drawn ; while the long conversations which he puts into their mouths, are as truthless as they are tiresome. Such as they are, however, they have been eagerly copied by a legion of the smaller poets and novel writers ; so that, jointly with Thomas Campbell, Cooper is responsible for the fathering of those aboriginal heroes, lovers, and sages, who have long formed a petty nuisance in our literature (14).

The qualifications that follow this sweeping statement are of course generally neglected, but it should be borne in mind that Parkman considered Uncas as one of the most « interesting » characters in the novel, that he recognized in Magua « a less untruthful portrait », and that he took pains to show that Magua's love for Cora was in keeping with the Indian character (15).

The great historian's praise of Hawkeye, « in the Mohicans as elsewhere, clearly and admirably drawn » — except for « an excessive and ill-timed loquacity » — and the following eulogy of the atmosphere pervading the whole work should also be remembered :

It is easy to find fault with *The Last of the Mohicans* ; but it is far from easy to rival or even approach its excellences. The book has the genuine game flavor ; it exhales the odors of the pine woods and the freshness of the mountain wind. Its dark and rugged scenery rises as distinctly on the eye as the images of the painter's canvas, or rather as the reflection of nature herself. But it is not as the mere rendering of material forms, that these wood paintings are most highly to be esteemed. They are instinct with life, with the very spirit of the wilderness ; they breathe the sombre poetry of solitude and danger. In these achievements of his art, Cooper, we think, has no equal, unless it may be the author of that striking romance, *Wacousta* or the *Prophecy*, whose fine powers of

(14) Cf. p. 150.

(15) Cf. p. 155.

imagination are, however, even less under the guidance of a just taste than those of the American novelist.

The passage on Cooper's excellence in his « descriptions of action » well deserves to be quoted at length :

The most obvious merit of *The Last of the Mohicans* consists in its descriptions of action, in the power with which the author absorbs the reader's sympathies, and leads him, as it were, to play a part in the scene. One reads the accounts of a great battle — aside from any cause or principle at issue — with the same kind of interest with which he beholds the grand destructive phenomena of nature, a tempest at sea, or a tornado in the tropics ; yet with a feeling far more intense, since the conflict is not a mere striving of insensate elements, but of living tides of human wrath and valor. With descriptions of petty skirmishes or single combats, the feeling is of a different kind. The reader is enlisted in the fray, a partaker, as it were, in every thought and movement of the combatants, in the alternations of fear and triumph, the prompt expedient, the desperate resort, the palpitations of human weakness, or the courage that faces death. Of this species of description, the scene of the conflict at Glenn's Falls is an admirable example, unsurpassed, we think, even by the combat of Balfour and Bothwell, or by any other passage of the kind in the novels of Scott.

As for the page in which Parkman objects to the « bodily hardships » undergone by Cora and Alice, because, in his opinion, they make the heroines worthy of compassion rather than love, it is typical enough of the critic and of his time to be inserted in full :

It seems to us a defect in a novel or a poem, when the heroine is compelled to undergo bodily hardship, to sleep out at night in the woods, drenched by rain, stung by mosquitos and scratched by briars, — to forego all appliances of the toilet, and above all, to lodge in an Indian wigwam. Women have sometimes endured such privation, and endured it with fortitude ; but it may be safely affirmed, that for the time, all grace and romance were banished from their presence. We read Longfellow's Evangeline with much sympathy in the fortunes of the errant heroine... When, however, we had followed her for about two thousand miles on her forest pil-

grimage, and reflected on the figure she must have made, so tattered and bepatched, bedrenched and bedraggled, we could not but esteem it a happy circumstance that she failed, as she did, to meet her lover ; since, had he seen her in such plight, every spark of sentiment must have vanished from his breast, and all the romance of the poem have been ingloriously extinguished. With Cooper's heroines, Cora and Alice, the case is not so hard. Yet, as it does not appear that, on a journey of several weeks, they were permitted to carry so much as a valise or a carpet bag, and as we are expressly told, that on several occasions, they dropped by the wayside their gloves, veils, and other useful articles of apparel, it is certain, that at the journey's end, they must have presented an appearance more adapted to call forth a Christian sympathy than any emotion of a more romantic nature.

About a month later, in his *Memorial Discourse*, BRYANT does not dwell upon the Mohicans, perhaps because he considers that Cooper had already shown what he was capable of in his earlier masterpieces : the *Spy*, the *Pioneers* and the *Pilot* (16). His acknowledgment of the improbabilities of the story, together with his vindication of Cooper's genius, are, however, very striking :

Lionel Lincoln, which cannot be ranked among the successful productions of Cooper, was published in 1825 ; and in the year following appeared the *Last of the Mohicans*, which more than recovered the ground lost by its predecessor. In this work the construction of the narrative has signal defects, but it is one of the triumphs of the author's genius that he makes us unconscious of them while we read. It is only when we have had time to awake from the intense interest in which he has held us by the vivid reality of his narrative, and have begun to search for faults in cold blood, that we are able to find them. In the *Last of the Mohicans* we have a bolder portraiture of Leatherstocking than in the *Pioneers* (17).

(16) Cf. p. 49.

(17) Cf. p. 51.

It should be added that it is not WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, the poet, but a youthful admirer of Cooper — named *William C. Bryant* — who warmly praised the Indians of the Leatherstocking Tales in a letter dated : « Albion, New York, February 8th 1850 ».

See, at the Yale University Library, the unpublished volume of the Cooper

Some ten years later, in her *Pages and Pictures* (18) S.F.C. sums up in a few lines the main reasons of the success of the Mohicans :

Its success was greater than that of any previous book from the same pen. The freshness of the subject gave it a singular charm, while the rapid succession of spirited incident, entirely original in character, and the powerful interest infused into the whole work, commanded attention in a very unusual degree. Natty was greeted anew with delight ; there could be no doubt as to the success of the experiment of presenting him a second time to the reader. The character was sketched even more forcibly, though with less of poetical light, perhaps, than in the first book. It was the difference between vigorous manhood and venerable age. And instead of the single Indian, in the person of Chingachgook, warrior after warrior appears, until the scene is filled with numerous war-parties, and the villages of the contending tribes.

She next attempts to show that her father was indebted neither to Brockden Brown nor to Chateaubriand :

In Europe the book produced quite a startling effect ; the freshness of the subject, in the sense of fiction, naturally adding greatly to the vivid interest of the narrative. As yet, there had been but one American work of the imagination in which the red man was introduced with any prominence : « Edgar Huntley, » by Brockden Brown, a writer of undoubted talent, but scarcely known in England. While alluding to his work, it may be well to remark that Mr. Cooper had not read « Edgar Huntley » since his own boyhood, when his writing an Indian romance himself would have seemed an event wildly

correspondence : «... The fidelity of your delineations of Indian life and character has been often questioned. In a conversation recently with *Hosmer the Poet* on the subject, he characterised your Indians as the « Cions (sic) of Chivalry grafted on the stock of barbarism » though he professed to be a warm admirer of the LEATHER STOCKING TALES... I can well bear witness — from personal observation — to the truth of your representations of Indian character. Born and always residing near one of the Ancient Castles of the noble and once numerous Iroquois I have always taken a strong interest in the Red-men, and have so far obtained their confidence and friendship as to be inducted into their tribe as an adopted clansman... »

(18) Cf. pp. 129-31.

improbable. Of the books of Brockden Brown, « Weiland » had made the deepest impression on his mind. « The Mohicans » would assuredly have been precisely the book it now is had « Edgar Huntley » never been written. « The Atala » of M. de Chateaubriand he never read ; it was precisely the kind of book in which he would never have felt the least interest, quite too far removed from the realities of life for him to read more than a page or two. To the particular merits of that kind of book he was perhaps scarcely capable of doing justice ; he would have lacked the patience to look for them and pages so little in harmony with his own nature.

There follows, however, a statement to the effect that Cooper was not entirely satisfied with his work when he revised it after the lapse of some twenty years :

In reading « The Mohicans » for revision, a few years before his death, he observed, with a smile, that the book must needs have some interest for the reader, since it could amuse even the writer, who had in a great measure forgotten the details of his own work. He saw the defects of the book, however, more plainly perhaps than his readers. There were some faults of plot, and other errors of detail which did not satisfy him.

Finally S. F. C. points out that the insignificant part assigned to Colonel Munro, in the rescue of his daughters, is not at all in keeping with Cooper's own character as a father, and, curiously enough, the only means she finds of extenuating Cooper's mistake is to call attention, by contrast, to his success in drawing the character of Magua :

One defect of the book must strike those who knew him as singularly inconsistent with his own character. Munro, as a father placed in most painful circumstances, becomes a mere cipher, not only in the earlier scenes, but later, when we are following with the deepest anxiety the movements of Natty, and Uncas, and Heyward, intent on the rescue of the sisters ; while the scout, and the lover, and the young warrior, command our eager attention at every step, we actually forget the presence of the parent who accompanies the party. Never surely was there a father whose love for his children was of a deeper, purer, stronger nature than his own ; never was there one whose daily life and manner were more demonstra-

tive of the feeling ; the weakness of Munro's character on this particular point, as drawn in « The Mohicans, » becomes therefore the more remarkable. On the other hand, may we not assert that Magua, the subtle, treacherous, revengeful warrior, is one of the most skilfully drawn of his Indian sketches — a creature as thoroughly savage as any that ever roamed over the same ground, in real existence.

In January 1862, G. S. HILLIARD, in his excellent article on Cooper in the *Atlantic Monthly* (19), takes the Mohicans as an instance of Cooper's frequent offences against probability, and suggests that a very simple change, at the beginning of the story, might have made the plot far less objectionable :

For illustration of the above strictures we will refer to a single novel, « The Last of the Mohicans, » which everybody will admit to be one of the most interesting of his works, — full of rapid movement, brilliant descriptions, hair-breadth escapes, thrilling adventures, — which young persons probably read with more rapt attention than any other of his narratives. In the opening chapter we find at Fort Edward, on the head-waters of the Hudson, the two daughters of Colonel Munro, the commander of Fort William Henry, on the shores of Lake George ; though why they were at the former post, under the protection of a stranger, and not with their father, does not appear. Information is brought of the approach of Montcalm, with a hostile army of Indians and Frenchmen, from the North ; and the young ladies are straightway hurried off to the more advanced, and consequently more dangerous post, when prudence and affection would have dictated just the opposite course. Nor is this all. General Webb, the commander of Fort Edward, at the urgent request of Colonel Munro, sends him a reinforcement of fifteen hundred men, who march off through the woods, by the military road, with drums beating and colors flying ; and yet, strange to say, the young ladies do not accompany the troops, but set off, on the very same day, by a by-path, attended by no other escort than Major Heyward, and guided by an Indian whose fidelity is supposed to be assured by his having been flogged for drunkenness by the orders of Colonel Munro. The reason assigned for conduct so absurd that in real life it would have

(19) Cf. pp. 56-57.

gone far to prove the parties having a hand in it not to be possessed of that sound and disposing mind and memory which the law requires as a condition precedent to making a will is, that hostile Indians, in search of chance scalps, would be hovering about the column of troops, and so leave the by-path unmolested. But the servants of the party follow the route of the column : a measure, we are told, dictated by the sagacity of the Indian guide, in order to diminish the marks of their trail, if, haply, the Canadian savages should be prowling about so far in advance of their army ! Certainly, all the sagacity of the fort would seem to have been concentrated in the person of the Indian. How much of this improbability might have been avoided, if the action had been reversed, and the young ladies, in view of the gathering cloud of war, had been sent from the more exposed and less strongly guarded point of Fort William Henry to the safe fortress of Fort Edward ! Then the smallness of the escort and the risks of the journey would have been explained and excused by the necessity of the case ; and the subsequent events of the novel might have been easily accommodated to the change we have indicated (20).

In 1872 *Appleton's Journal* (21) vindicates Cooper's permanent value as a professor of energy and selects Leatherstocking and Uncas as types of his manly and healthy creations :

It is a good and healthful thing, in this age of the modern novel, to look back now and then into the sturdy manliness of Cooper's works. A noble literature has sprung up where he once stood so nearly alone : his defects are not of those that lessen with time ; his creations are very far from the humanity of to-day ; yet it would be better for Americans in this hurrying present if they read his stories oftener, and drew their juvenile ideas of what constitutes a healthy nature more frequently from his pages. We pore nowadays over misty psychological analyses of morbid « problematic natures, » given us by the brains of dyspeptic women or perilously « sensitive » men ; lose ourselves in would-be nice distinctions between natural right and artificial wrong ; or rush to the other extreme, and follow the embellished history of some muscular rake, only half rendered tolerable by his contrast with the feebleness of

(20) For a discussion of this proposed remedy, see our main thesis, chap. XI, p. 564.

(21) Cf. May 18, 1872. pp. 549-51.

the opposite type. We should not be weaker men for a spice of the sterling and unflinching crude morality of Leatherstocking. There is no longer a noble savage, the modern travellers say ; there are only dingy Digger Indians and brutal Apaches ; but there is a refreshing exaltation still to be gained by reading the story of the brave stoic, Uncas. We do not lay aside as unfaithful the Homeric books because the Greek of to-day is servile and predatory ; nor cease to delight in the legends of Arthur's Round Table because the modern Briton wears an eye-glass in one eye.

Two years later the same periodical (22) publishes JOHN ESTEN COOKE's spirited defence of Cooper's Indians, the conclusion of which runs as follows :

If the views of Indian character here presented be correct, it is difficult to understand why Cooper should be denounced for representing them, as he had done often, in a dignified and heroic attitude. As we have said, he does not shrink from painting also the shadows of the picture, and the critics must fall back, at last, on the charge that the author gives undue prominence to the nobler traits of the red-skins, slurring over what was barbarous and repulsive. The fairness or unfairness of this charge will be decided upon by every reader for himself. We think the charge unfounded. In any event, a writer is justified in selecting the colors for his picture. There is evidence in abundance that the Indian character was brave, heroic, full of dignity, of endurance, and permeated by a lofty if wild spirit of poetry. Cooper had certainly a right to embody these traits, even if other traits of the race were cruelty and treachery.

The question, however, is a purely literary and critical one, and its decision will have little or no effect upon the renown of the author. His Indians remain the representatives of their race. These singular people disappear day by day, and have dwindled now to the ignoble type seen in the Comanches, Diggers, and Modocs. The Iroquois, the Shawnees, the Tuscaroras, and Delawares, have " gone beyond the sunset. " The North-American Indian, in his great phase of development, with his fierce courage, his endurance, his heroism, and his poetry, lives only in " The Last of the Mohicans, " " The

(22) Cf. August 29, 1874, pp. 264-67.

Prairie, » « The Pathfinder, » and the other American tales of Cooper.

In 1883 LOUNSBURY shows himself a broad-minded critic while explaining that the novel « deserved fully the success it gained » :

Of all the novels written by Cooper, « The Last of the Mohicans » is the one in which the interest not only never halts, but never sinks. It is, indeed, an open question, whether a higher art would not have given more breathing-places in this exciting tale, in which the mind is hurried without pause from sensation to sensation. But this is a fault, if it be a fault, which the reader will always forgive, whatever the critic may say. The latter, indeed, can see much to blame if he look at the work purely as an artistic creation. He can find improbability of action, insufficiency of motive, and feebleness of outline in many of the leading characters. But these are minor drawbacks. They sink into absolute insignificance when compared with the wealth of power displayed. As they are unable to retard the unflagging interest with which the story is read, so they do not essentially modify the estimation of it after it has been read.

His praise of Hawkeye is particularly warm, but it is sung at the expense of poor Leatherstocking :

In this work two great achievements were accomplished by Cooper. The first was the idealization of the white hunter whom he had described in « The Pioneers. » No one can read the two novels in succession without seeing at once how much Leather-Stocking has gained in dignity. In thought and feeling and habits he is essentially the same ; but there was given to his character a poetic elevation which raised it at once to the front rank of the creations of the imagination, and will make it imperishable with English literature... This delineation has always met with unqualified praise.

As for Cooper's second « great achievement » i. e. « the idealization of the Indian character as seen in Chingachgook and Uncas », Lounsbury approves of it on several grounds :

This is not the place to express an opinion upon the truth of the representation. It is enough to say here that the view Cooper took was not hastily formed, nor was it the result of accidental prejudices... Certainly he never found reason to modify his views, though he was familiar with the criticism made upon them. Toward the close of his life he took occasion to reaffirm them. It is also to be added that if he gave especial prominence to certain virtues, real or imaginary, of the Indian race, he was equally careful not to pass over their vices. Most of the warriors he introduces are depicted as crafty, blood-thirsty, and merciless. But whether his representation be true or false, it has from that time to this profoundly affected opinion. Throughout the whole civilized world the conception of the Indian character, as Cooper drew it in « *The Last of the Mohicans* » and still further elaborated it in the later « *Leather-Stocking Tales*, » has taken permanent hold of the imaginations of men. Individuals may cast it off ; but in the case of the great mass it stands undisturbed by doubt or unshaken by denial. This much can be said in its favor irrespective of the question of its accuracy. If Cooper has given to Indian conversation more poetry than it is thought to possess, or to Indian character more virtue, the addition has been a gain to literature, whatever it may have been to truth.

In 1885 J. G. WILSON (24) recalls the conversation in which HALLECK so warmly and picturesquely expressed his admiration for Cooper and his heroes :

Conversing with the author on a summer day at Guilford, Halleck said of Cooper : « He is colonel of the literary regiment ; Irving, lieutenant-colonel ; Bryant, the major ; while Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Dana, and myself may be considered captains... Two or three of Cooper's characters I consider the first in American fiction. Which are they ? Why, Leatherstocking, Long Tom Coffin, and Uncas. Why this noble creation has been so neglected by painters and sculptors I am at a loss to understand. Certainly there is no nobler Indian character depicted in our literature. »

On the occasion of Cooper's centenary, BRANDER MATTHEWS

(24) Cf. *Bryant and His Friends*, p. 238.

(25) calls attention to the fact that Cooper's imitators have considerably injured his well-earned fame :

The Last of the Mohicans has suffered the degradation of a trail of dime novels, written by those apparently more familiar with the Five Points than with the Five Nations ; Cooper begat Mayne Reid, and Mayne Reid begat Ned Buntline and *Buffalo Bill's First Scalp for Custer* and similar abominations. But none the less are Uncas and Hardheart noble figures, worthily drawn, and never to be mentioned without praise.

A few years later, however, MARK TWAIN publishes in the *North American Review* (26) his famous article on « Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences », in which he incidentally ridicules the woodcraft of Chingachgook [Uncas] and the stilted language of Colonel Munro :

For instance one of his acute Indian experts, Chingachgook (pronounced Chicago, I think), has lost the trail of a person he is tracking through the forest. Apparently that trail is hopelessly lost. Neither you nor I could ever have guessed out the way to find it. It was very different with Chicago. Chicago was not stumped for long. He turned a running stream out of its course, and there, in the slush in its old bed, were that person's moccasin-tracks. The current did not wash them away, as it would have done in all other like cases — no, even the eternal laws of Nature have to vacate when Cooper wants to put up a delicate job of woodcraft on the reader...

We cannot imagine such a thing as a veteran Scotch Commander-in-Chief comporting himself in the field like a windy melodramatic actor, but Cooper could. On one occasion Alice and Cora were being chased by the French through a fog in the neighborhood of their father's fort :

« *Point de quartier aux coquins !* » cried an eager pursuer, who seemed to direct the operations of the enemy.

« Stand firm and be ready, my gallant 60 ths ! » suddenly exclaimed a voice above them ; « wait to see the enemy ; fire low, and sweep the glacia. »

« Father ! father ! » exclaimed a piercing cry from out the mist ; « it is I ! Alice ! thy own Elsie ! spare, oh ! save your daughters ! »

(25) Cf. *Americanisms and Britishisms*, New York, Harper, 1892, p. 98.

(26) Cf. July 1895, pp. 4-5 and 10-11.

« Hold ! » shouted the former speaker, in the awful tones of parental agony, the sound reaching even to the woods, and rolling back in solemn echo. « 'Tis she ! God has restored me my children ! Throw open the sally port ; to the field, 60ths, to the field ; pull not a trigger, lest ye kill my lambs ! Drive off these dogs of France with your steel. »

In his answer to Mark Twain, D. L. MAULSBY (27) justifies the former episode in the following terms :

Mr. Clemens finds food for laughter in an Indian's turning a running stream out of its course and finding traces of a footprint in its alluvial bed. But Cooper is careful to describe the stream as a « turbid little rill. » If the phenomenon could occur under any circumstances it were possible under these.

In 1900 W. B. SHUBRICK CLYMER (28) testifies to the perennial charm of the Mohicans in spite of the defects of its plot and of the tameness of many a character :

It sprang into instant popularity, which it maintains probably better than any other of its author's books. And no wonder ; for its freshness and freedom so win us at fifteen that at fifty we still enjoy meeting again our old friends Hawkeye, Uncas, Chingachgook, and Magua, who are a spirited enough team to draw at a brisk pace the heavy load of the other characters. Though the story, it is true, halts and right-about-faces in the middle, and the horrid slaughter of savages is artistically atrocious, yet, despite more or less fumbling of plot, and a few incidents of sublimated sensationalism, and the error of ending with a lugubrious wail which might better have been a triumphal flourish of trumpets, we readily accept Parkman's testimony to the effect on himself of this and of Cooper's other early books. « The scenes and characters of several of his novels, » Parkman writes the year after the publication of his own *Pontiac*, « have been so stamped by the potency of his art upon my mind that I sometimes find it difficult to separate them distinctly from the recollections of my own past experiences. I may say, without exaggeration, that Cooper has had an influence in determining the course of my life and pursuits. »

(27) Cf. *The Dial*, Chicago, February 16, 1897, p. 108.

(28) Cf. *James Fenimore Cooper*, in the *Beacon Biographies*, Boston, Small, Maynard & Co., pp. 43-47.

Shubrick Clymer, of course, is aware of Parkman's criticism of Cooper's Indians, but he vindicates them from the point of view of literature :

Cooper's Indians, in the dozen books where they appear, neither he nor any one else ever met in the woods. He had read the then duly accredited writers on the subject, had studied delegates from Western tribes who came East, and from childhood had imbibed the Indian traditions which clung about Otsego Lake and its neighbourhood. Of material thus fortuitously acquired before the present era of scientific study had even dawned he constructed idealised types not more remote from reality than Scott's mediæval knights. As a restoration of a past state of things, *The Last of the Mohicans* bears a certain analogy to *Ivanhoe*. Neither is historically accurate. As literature, however, the one is no more discredited by Bret Harte's travesty than the other is by Thackeray's burlesque...

So widely accepted is Cooper's conception of the Indian that to question the truth of the delineation is to disquiet many pious souls by seeming to imply that real Indians are degenerate past redemption. Now, Cooper did present some lofty specimens of manhood in war-paint and feathers, and everybody knows that individual Indians exist as dignified and magnanimous as any of his imagining ; but it must be remembered, likewise, that he presented degraded Indians, and that the chief of them all, the subtle Magua, is as incarnate a knave as Iago... Whether ethnological research verify his types, or whether Sims's (sic) are better likenesses, matters little. More to the point is the question of the spectacular and dramatic effect of the figures, which any normal boy can answer by saying whether he would have them different.

In June of that same year, F. L. PATTEE publishes in *The Chautauquan* (29) a detailed study of the Mohicans, which he calls « Cooper's best work ». The tone is very favourable throughout, owing to the fact that, from the start, the critic chooses to minimize the defects generally objected to by considering them as the natural outcome of Cooper's resolve to write a « romance » and not a « novel » :

(29) Cf. pp. 287-92. A revised version of this study was published in 1927, as an introduction to Macmillan's edition of the Mohicans in *The Modern Readers' Series*.

That the book is a romance is written on every page. Its characters, like David Gamut, and Munro, and Magua, are manifestly impossible. Many of its episodes are highly unreal. It is a book of rescues in the nick of time... Such a series of episodes never happens in actual life. The book is manifestly a romance.

This being said, the plot can be praised without stint from many points of view :

From the mechanical standpoint, *The Last of the Mohicans* is well-nigh perfect. The plot is singularly simple ; it observes almost the unities of the Greek drama. The time is two weeks, or between August 3 and August 17, 1757, and of this time one week — four days at the fort and three days succeeding the massacre — occupies but little of the narrative. The action never leaves the forest in the vicinity of Fort William Henry, and it is controlled by a single dominating purpose — the revenge of Magua. The characters fall into three well-defined groups : the victims of the conspiracy — Munro, Heyward, Gamut, Cora, and Alice ; the formers of the conspiracy — Magua and his Hurons ; and the foilers of the conspiracy — Hawkeye, Chingachgook, and Uncas. The attempts of Magua to gain possession of the daughters of Munro, that he may through them avenge an old insult, and the constant intervention of Hawkeye and his band, constitute the story.

There are three main episodes : Part I recounts the adventures of Heyward and the « females » on their journey through the forests between Fort Edward and Fort William Henry ; Part II, opening with Chapter XV, recounts the story of the siege and the massacre of Fort William Henry ; Part III, opening with Chapter XVIII, details the adventures of Hawkeye and his followers upon the trail of Cora and Alice, and the final catastrophe. The tale is singularly free from complexity. The lines of action seldom cross. Part I, with the single exception of Chapter III, is told from the standpoint of Heyward [30] and his party ; Part II converges all lines of action ; and Part III is told mainly from the standpoint of Hawkeye and his followers. It is a simple tale told straight on like the yarn of a hunter at a camp-fire. It works steadily and inevitably toward the climax and the culminating catastrophe. The consummation, or the final thwarting of the revenge of Magua, is felt constantly to be the end in view. In Part I he is successfully foiled, but his half miraculous escape and his

increased hatred make the next conspiracy more deadly and more difficult to baffle. The plot culminates with the simultaneous deaths of Cora, Uncas and Magua, — one from each group.

As for the characters, the majority of them can be humorously criticized without leaving the reader in doubt as to the final verdict of the writer :

It is useless to deny that the greater number of his characters are mere wooden types. Magua, with his scowls, his flashing eyes (make a study of the various expressions on his face) and his bursts of rage, is not a study of Indian character ; he is simply the villain of the piece, a mere impersonation of revenge. General Munro is Scotch only in name ; no British officer in his right mind ever acted as he did at the close of Chapter XIV. He is simply a stock old man redolent of the make-up box and the property-room. Alice is a mere bundle of adjectives, and Heyward is but a representative of the British army. He is not individualized in the least ; he is merely a wooden type. Note his stupidity about all things pertaining to forest life : his inane mistake at the beaver dam ; his refusal to fight Indians from behind a cover ; his statement that he would clear the woods of their swarm of skulking Indians by a bayonet charge. The scout chuckles constantly over his ignorance, and uses him as a living illustration of his favorite text, « what fools these white men be. » His chief use in the book is to furnish the love-story without which a romance was supposed to be impossible, and to serve as a foil for Hawkeye. But Cooper at times forgets, and changes his character without warning. When he enters the Indian village in disguise, and when he bears the fainting Alice from the cave, he is as keen at repartee in the Indian fashion as the scout himself. David Gamut is a mere caricature upon the New England Calvinists who were so detested by Cooper. One has but to read the description of this creature in Chapter I to realize how utterly impossible he is. But Cooper is not consistent in his picture ; the character develops in his hands. At first a grotesque « non-composer, » David at the close of the book has become a real hero. His little funeral service at the grave of Cora is truly pathetic. Chingachgook, with his

(30) Both in the *Chautauquan* and in the Macmillan edition *Heyward* is written *Heywood*. We have corrected the error in order to help our readers.

monosyllable, is but a typical good Indian. Uncas is characterized with more care, yet aside from his silent love for Cora, which is depicted with rare skill, he has little of individuality to separate him from Cooper's stock type.

The two really living characters in the book are Cora and Hawkeye. Despite the fact that Cooper usually found it an impossibility to depict feminine character, he has here created a real heroine. We see little of her. There are times when she talks the most inane of book talk ; but, after all, when one lays down the volume he has a very distinct mental picture of her. Her conduct during the last chapters is lifelike and touching. The character of Cora is alone enough to vindicate Cooper from Lowell's criticism of his « females. » In Hawkeye we have the glory of the romance. It is he that keeps it perennially alive. He is one of the few great original characters in all fiction. He dominates the book, and he is in reality the cause of its existence.

Of course Cooper's recognized gifts are duly dwelt upon :

« The author never suffers the interest to flag... so skilful is he with his narrative that one is seldom tempted as in Scott, to skip pages and chapters...

In the management of his background Cooper has also shown himself to be a master. The opening chapter creates from the start an atmosphere that is vast and satisfying. At every step throughout the romance the reader finds himself in dim, mysterious forests that stretch on every side into the unknown. All of the nameless thrill of a wild life under the open sky sweeps over him. In some mysterious way Cooper makes us feel his environments, and catch to the full all that they hold of mystery and romance. It is a new world that he takes us into, with a language all its own. We are permitted to learn the alphabet of this language. Under the expert guidance of Uncas and Hawkeye we follow the trail of Magua and Cora, just as under the guidance of Sherlock Holmes we uncover the trail of a fugitive criminal. The source of interest in each case is precisely the same. We are taught to catch the sounds of wild life in the woods ; and we tremble to feel that perhaps all about us are malignant beings from whom it is impossible to hide. We not only see the woods but we feel them, — and yet it is not the actual forest, that we feel ; it is the forest as Cooper saw it in his memories of a happy boyhood, a forest idealized and glorified. His descriptions are in reality lyric poems. Read, for example, the second para-

graph of Chapter III and the night scene near the opening of Chapter VII.

In addition F. L. Pattee maintains that the *Mohicans* is not only free from those digressions so often found in Cooper's novels, but also from « sensationalism » :

The Last of the Mohicans is free from melodramatic effects. Violent and sensational episodes are never thrust suddenly upon the reader when he is off his guard. Cooper's startling episodes are always prepared for. Nothing could be more sudden than the appearance of Hawkeye and his Indians upon the little hilltop where such awful preparations were making, [chapter XII], but the observant reader has long known by many little indications that just such a rescue is inevitable. Cooper is seldom really sensational. He never, for instance, breaks off suddenly in a moment of suspense and begins a new chapter with a fresh line of action. His plot moves naturally ; there is about even his wildest episodes an air of verisimilitude that makes it an effort seriously to doubt their probability. (31)

Finally Cooper's style — together with many of his other defects — are excused in a broad-minded and philosophical conclusion :

It is easy to criticize Cooper. One may find examples in profusion of his elephantine humor, and his wooden conversations. It is easy to show that his attitude toward the ladies is usually that of the woodsman and the sailor, who have lived all their lives away from them. The description of Alice, for example, becomes positively humorous, for has she not a « dazzling complexion, » « dove-like eyes, » teeth « that would shame the purest ivory, » and « a smile of ineffable innocence » ? His love scenes are mawkish and unreal ; his style is often inflated, and he often shuns the vulgar vocabulary of daily life. Gamut fans himself with his hat, but Cooper declares that he is « making diligent use of his triangular castor to produce a circulation in the close air of the woods. » But after all, this is but shallow criticism. Cooper was an artist who

(31) It must be noted, however, that this passage is omitted in the revised version prefixed to the Macmillan edition — probably because F. L. Pattee no longer classes the *Mohicans* as a « romance », but as a « melodramatic romance ».

drew life and character with broad strokes. Seen too near, the canvas becomes a mere ludicrous mixing of colors, but seen at the proper focus it springs at once into life. There appear before us the figures of strong, elemental men, against a background free-aired and vast.

There are three stages in Cooper criticism. The boy reads breathlessly the thrilling tale of adventure in the forest and on the ocean. He never dreams that there are imperfections and crudities in his author. To him the romance is like an enchanter's wand, — it transports him into a new world, where he wanders breathless out of sight of all known landmarks. The second stage comes in early manhood. The young student has learned the elements of criticism, and no classics yield so readily to his amateur hand as Cooper. Even a novice in criticism can write learnedly of Cooper's errors. In his eager search for imperfections, the young critic overlooks everything else ; he reads only to condemn. The third stage comes with experience and ripened judgment. The critic now finds that despite his imperfections Cooper was one of the few great story-tellers of the race ; a man of heroic proportions ; a man as wholesome as nature herself, as fresh and as free as the new western world. He finds that the romances which he has so glibly criticized were largely instrumental in creating an epoch in the history of prose fiction, and that almost alone among American authors Cooper has added a new domain and a new character to the field of literature. Surely he who has done this is no small figure. It is safe to say that so long as the story of the early days of the vanishing forest and Indian, of the struggle in the pathless woods for a continent shall continue to hold anything of interest and romance, so long will Cooper be read and remembered.

Two months later WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS deals with Scott and Cooper in the ninth of his papers on « Heroines of Nineteenth Century Fiction » (32), but the title of his paper : « Scott's Jeanie Deans and Cooper's Lack of Heroines » at once prepares the reader for the perfunctory — and even ironical — lines which the father of American realism thinks fit to bestow on the great romanticist :

So far as I know it, his [Cooper's] romance has never the

(32) Cf. *Harper's Bazar*, August 11, 1900, pp. 907-08, and *Heroines of Fiction*, New-York. 1901, I, pp. 102-12.

grace that Scott wins now and again for his from the presence of a genuine heroine. But on this point I was willing to own myself not very well fitted to judge, since my knowledge of Cooper was at best vague and of remote date ; and in my misgiving I turned to a literary friend who had made rather a special study of him, and entreated him to help me out with a heroine from him. He answered in effect that the heroines of Cooper did not exist even in the imagination of his readers ; there were certain figures in his pages, always introduced as « females, » and of such an extremely conventional and lady-like deportment in all circumstances that you wished to kill them. But he added, in a magnanimous despair, that if I would I might read « *The Last of the Mohicans*, » and possibly come away with a heroine. I have just finished the book, with a true regret that I was not a boy of fourteen, or else a man in the second quarter of the century, when I read it ; but I have not come away with a heroine. This is not because I have killed either Cora Munro or her sister Alice ; but since I am guiltless of their death I am glad they *are* dead.

In 1903, on the other hand, TRENT's widely-read *History of American Literature* contains a most favourable paragraph on the Mohicans (33) :

...Cooper atoned for *Lionel Lincoln* by publishing *The Last of the Mohicans*, probably the best and most popular of all his romances. Merely as a story of thrilling adventures it would be worthy of high praise, but it is much more than this. It is full of the poetry of the forest, which is especially embodied in the great hunter Hawkeye, in whom the nobler elemental qualities of the race are « bound each to each by natural piety. » The more sophisticated characters do not especially attract, but they at least pass muster, and the Indians Chingachgook and Uncas are entirely worthy of Natty's friendship. Time was when Cooper's Indians were patronizingly regarded as sentimental idealizations, but competent anthropologists have of late been treating them with more respect. Ingenious persons still continue to assure us that Cooper's heroes could not have performed this or that feat in the given time and space, but their strictures are sufficiently answered by the statement that measuring poles and chronometers have not yet been accepted as necessary appliances of criticism.

Three years later W. C. BROWNELL, in his masterly study on Cooper (34), defends both Cooper's Indians and Cooper's « females », taking of course some of his examples from the Mohicans. With regard to the heroines, he declares that he prefers those of the *Deerslayer* and of the *Mohicans* to those of *Ivanhoe* and *Waverley*. As for the Indians, he says :

So far from being untruthful idealizations Cooper's little group of « good Indians » is in both quality and importance considerably below what a writer not actuated by the truly realistic purpose which was always his would be justified in depicting as representative of the best specimens of the Indian race. The history of this country abounds in figures from Massasoit to Brandt, from Osceola to Joseph, of moral and mental stature hardly emulated by any of Cooper's aborigines. The only approach to them is in the sage Tamemund of the Lenni Lenape, who is introduced at a great age, and with failing faculties almost extinct. Chingachgook dies a drunkard as old Indian John. Uncas is slain when a mere youth, before his character is thoroughly developed.

That same year L. H. VINCENT's essay on Cooper is rather disappointing as regards the Mohicans, for it lacks originality and suffers from a confusion between Chingachgook and Uncas. After stating that « all things considered », the Mohicans is « the most famous of Cooper's novels » the critic goes on to say :

If *The Last of the Mohicans* suffers from one fault more than another, it is from a superabundance of hair-breadth escapes...

As might have been expected, in growing younger Natty has grown theatrical ; he appears too exactly at the critical moment to perform the deed of cool bravery expected of him. It could hardly be otherwise ; *The Last of the Mohicans* is a romance, and in romances such things must be. Chingachgook, that engaging savage (sic), has for so many years met the romantic ideal of the American Indian that it is unlikely he will ever be disturbed in his place in the reader's esteem. (35)

Again, in 1906, MAUD E. KINGSLEY publishes for school use

(34) Cf. *Scribner's Magazine* for April 1906, pp. 455-68 (especially, pp. 464-65 and 469) and *American Prose Masters*, New York. 1909, pp. 3-60.

(35) Cf. *American Literary Masters*, pp. 79-80.

an « outline study » of the Mohicans, in which the merits and defects of the work are classified as follows, under the heading « Literary Analysis of the Novel » :

Literary Excellences of the Novel. *a.* Characterized by inexhaustible imagination. *b.* Full of genuine and effective tragic scenes... *c.* Contains passages of noteworthy description... *d.* Masterly character drawing in the Scout, Chingachgook, and Uncas.

Literary Defects of the Novel. *a.* Style often stilted and pretentious... *b.* Aside from the Scout and the two Mohicans his characters are badly drawn. *c.* His work uneven in excellence. *LAST OF THE MOHICANS* is remarkable for its episodes rather than as a whole.

Other parts of the Outline contain a warm tribute to Hawkeye, a testimony to the literary influence of Cooper's conception of the Indian character, and a defence of the tragic ending of the novel :

Natty Bumppo (sic), the Scout, called Hawkeye throughout the story, is the best drawn character in American fiction...

- (a.) The Scout is the type of the hardy race who pushed westward the reign of civilization. His prototype may be found in Daniel Boone.
- (b.) He stands halfway between savage and civilized life. He has the freshness of nature and the first fruits of Christianity ; the seed dropped into vigorous soil. These are the elements of one of the most original characters in fiction, in whom Cooper has transplanted all the chivalry ever feigned or practiced in the Middle Ages, to the rivers, woods, and forests of the New World...

Cooper in his *LAST OF THE MOHICANS* and *Longfellow in Hiawatha* have created the popular impression of the American Indian of the Pioneer Age...

Had Uncas been wholly disinterested he would not have made such strenuous efforts to rescue Cora. His falling in love with Cora was the motive needed to justify the most tragic scenes of the story. It would have been impossible for the book to have any other ending. Cora could not have married Uncas had they lived, and any other termination of the story would have been exceedingly commonplace. (36)

(36) Cf. The Palmer Co. Boston, pp. 23-25, 21-23, 19, 10.

The following year both BRANDER MATTHEWS (37) and LILLIE D. LOSHE (38) defend in their turn Cooper's Indians and Cooper's heroines, but without referring to the Mohicans in particular.

In 1909, W. R. WICKES, in his edition of the Mohicans for Macmillan's *Pocket Classics*, contains an interesting passage on Cooper's descriptive powers :

...not even a hop-skip-and-jump reader of the novelist could fail to notice his faulty *style*. A catalogue of all its defects, with accompanying « proof-texts, » would fill a volume : it was oftentimes careless, slipshod, inaccurate, involved, circumlocutory. But as Webster's test of true eloquence was persuasion, so may we regard Cooper's style, though faulty, yet effective, when judged by the strong and sustained interest his words excite. No apology is needed, however, when we come to speak of that which was Cooper's greatest power, — his power of *description*. Many are the passages which the editor has marked as proof unchallenged of that power. Only a few may here be cited. Turn, please, to that passage in the first chapter beginning, « According to the orders of the preceding night. » Mark the blending of the peace of Nature with the stir of preparation for war. Read the description carefully, then close your eyes and see it. Or note the scenic grandeur of the « meeting of the morning, » in chapter fourteen : « As they gradually rose from the level of the valley. » Still, again, was ever the desolation of Nature pictured with more sombre grandeur than in the eighteenth chapter, elaborating the statement : « A frightful change had also occurred in the season. » The account of the beaver dam in chapter twenty-one, and of Heyward's surprise, how finely pictured forth ! With what a breathless interest, eye and mind travel along those pages in the twenty-third chapter which record the rites of the dusky savages gloating over the sufferings of their unfortunate captives. But I must close this enumeration, — how better than by bringing to the reader's attention that magnificent passage in chapter twenty-eight, when, after describing the aged Tamenund, the historian continues : « The eyes of the old man were closed. » It is the very apotheosis of all that was noble and venerable in one whose feet had almost reached the borders of the Spirit Land !

(37) Cf. *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1907, pp. 338 and 334.

(38) Cf. *The Early American Novel*, Columbia Ph. D., pp. 86-89.

In 1910, JOHN ERSKINE'S painstaking study on Cooper, in his *Leading American Novelists*, does not ignore the defects generally ascribed to the Mohicans but minimizes them in a convincing manner :

Like Cooper's other masterpieces, *The Last of the Mohicans* has serious faults, or rather improbabilities, of construction ; it has been easy to point out the folly of summoning the heroines to a fort about to be captured, and no good reason is given for sending them by an unknown and dangerous route, when they could have had the escort of the regiments. The woodcraft of this story has been an amusing target for Mark Twain's criticism. But none of these questions touch the book's real power, which lies in its wealth of adventure. The rapidity of the incidents has been justly called breathless. And the adventure takes place in an atmosphere of true poetry, an unsuspected source of delight to many an uncritical reader. (p. 77)

The idealization of the characters of Uncas and Chingachgook, and the painting of Magua as a romantic villain, are not only explained but approved of on the whole :

Chingachgook and his son Uncas are idealized within the limits permissible to any heroes of romance, yet the portrait conceded so much to actual Indian character that Parkman's well-known objection to their unnatural virtues has been almost entirely discarded by later critical judgment. (p. 78)

Cooper follows Scott and the other romancers in his invariable use of the villain. If he portrays no elaborate wickedness to match Rashleigh's character, in *Rob Roy*, at least his villains are unmistakably bad, and in one or two instances they have as great individuality. In the portrayal of evil, as in everything else, Cooper's genius works most effectively on the frontier, and Le Renard Subtil, the Indian enemy in *The Last of the Mohicans*, is easily his most successful embodiment of wickedness. He availed himself of the Indian qualities of shrewdness and treachery, to paint a figure which should be almost diabolical, and yet perfectly natural, — which perhaps is more than can be said for Rashleigh. Le Renard's cruel determination to possess Cora, his device for luring her into the forest by carrying off her sister Alice, and the satisfaction he has in stabbing Uncas, are nothing short of devilish, yet the circumstances of his race, and his treatment at the hands

of Cora's father and Chingachgook, make his conduct inevitable rather than incomprehensible. He is the finest of Cooper's villains because the evil in him is joined with a great capacity and a noble scale of action, and he is not a coward...

David Gamut is considered as successful a bore as the surgeon of the *Spy*, Dr. Sitgreaves :

The pedant that Cooper likes to introduce into these stories is in this case a strangely effective figure. In David Gamut, the singing teacher, Cooper produces a travesty on the New England character that in certain picturesque details of physique and horsemanship recalls Ichabod Crane. Neither of the two great New York writers had much insight into the Yankee nature ; perhaps it is natural that they should treat it with most tenderness in their most exaggerated burlesques of it ; it is natural to make amends with a little sympathy, in the midst of so much ridicule. David Gamut is an admirable foil for Hawkeye, whose contempt for the pitch-pipe, " that useless we'pon, " at first blinds him to the singer's few and simple virtues. But in scenes of danger a constantly strengthened impulse to take up real arms and fight, at last wins the scout's respect. Gamut also brings out in both the Mohicans and the Hurons the Indian reverence for the mentally infirm, and Hawkeye himself is not unawed by the singer's phraseology and his rhapsodies. A large share of the romance of the story settles about this uncouth figure as he stands in the massacre at Fort William Henry, actually protecting Cora and Alice by his song. (pp. 79-80)

Even Colonel Munro's portrait is pronounced satisfactory :

It would have been hard to improve on the portraits of Munro, the English commander, and Montcalm. The first is largely a fictitious person, elaborated according to the needs of the plot and Cooper's idea of the British soldier of the period. The conflict in his heart between his duties as commander and his love for his daughter gives him a place of dignity in the romance, which otherwise, in view of his defeat and his helplessness, he could hardly hold. As a soldier he is of course brave, but not astute ; Cooper lets him stand for the usual British incapacity to cope with the Indians, which Braddock so fatally illustrated. Only such a man would have summoned his daughters to a besieged fort, or would have neglected to insist on Montcalm's promised escort. (pp. 80-81)

As for the strong points of the novel, they are, of course, duly emphasized. The poetry of some of the scenes is particularly well brought home to the reader :

... the adventure in the old burying-ground and the encounter with the unfortunate French sentinel by the bloody pond, — such pictures as the imagination would build upon actual sight of those places, — belong not to history at all, but to poetry and romance. In these two latter scenes, as in most of the night descriptions, the landscape becomes an element of great power, almost an actor in the story. Cooper is nearer here than anywhere else to the classical awe of nature, or the Wordsworthian sense of its personality. At such moments he is most the poet ; he makes the dim moonlit forest seem to close in upon the human adventure and supplant it ; had his temperament been less sane, so much susceptibility would have endowed the northern pinewoods with sylvan deities out of hand. (pp. 81-82).

Finally Hawkeye is praised with much feeling, but unfortunately at the expense of the Leatherstocking of the *Pioneers*, and for reasons which do not seem to be fully supported by Cooper's own text :

Hawkeye is here a much nobler figure than the old hunter of the settlement. He exhibits at its best that philosophy, mingled fatalism and optimism, which is inseparable now from his memory. He shows no surliness nor discontent, as in *The Pioneers*. In fact, the only important trait common to both books is his miraculous skill with the rifle. But what raises him to heroic proportions in this story is his love for Uncas, a master passion that quite exceeds his faithful friendship with Chingachgook. With Uncas dies the hope of the indian race, and the cause of his death is his hopeless worship of the white girl. With him dies also the only social tie that could have bound Hawkeye to any society ; for Uncas, as he so often says, is almost his own son. As Uncas is enlisted in Cora's service by his love for her, so the scout follows, more for the youth's sake than for any other reason, and few passages in romance record more perfect chivalry than Hawkeye's return to the Huron camp to die with Uncas, — or his offer to give his life to Le Renard in exchange for Cora — an offer that had in mind the happiness of Uncas as well as of the girl. (p. 79)

In July of the same year E. E. HALE's article on « American Scenery in Cooper's Novels » (39) shows that the author of the *Mohicans* kept, on the whole, sufficiently close to actual scenery to create an impression of reality :

Without spending more time on topography, we may feel quite sure that Cooper had a feeling for reality in place, though he had no idea of allowing his realism to interfere with what he felt the story needed. We feel that we are in a real country.

In 1913, JOHN MACY speaks very favourably of the *Mohicans* in his *Spirit of American Literature* (40). His defence of Cooper's Indians is felt to be quite sincere :

It is a tribute to Cooper that no American since his time, for all our real or pretended gains in ethnological knowledge, has made any better Indians... Men who go north and meet the woods Indian still unspoiled (I am thinking especially of one sympathetic and shrewd observer) tell us that they find the living brother of Cooper's bronze hero, dignified, of high honour, stoical and eloquent. Cooper's red heroes are at least as convincing as many of the paleface heroes of romance whom we accept. Uncas and Chingachgook will bear scrutiny as well as Rob Roy and Robin Hood. (p. 42)

Hawkeye is praised in a rather original way :

It is with them, the figures of myth, that Natty Bumppo belongs ; he is not an American character but a fabulous personage, like Ulysses, Achilles, King Arthur, and the adorable pirates of Howard Pyle and Stevenson. He has taken his place in this gallery of demigods and held it for a century. There he seems likely to remain until we close the institution forever and the innocent credulity which is the postulate of romance shall become an atrophied function in man. (p. 43)

Cooper's style alone is mentioned as a drawback — but only for grown-up readers — and the two examples chosen not being

(39) Cf. *The Sewanee Review*, July 1910, p. 326.

(40) New-York, Doubleday, pp. 35-44.

very convincing — the first because it has been violently wrenched from its context, and the second because it postulates a great ignorance of literary fashions in the reader — the final impression is not as harmful as might have been expected :

... His style is one of the obstacles that his story plows through, like Bumpo shouldering through underbrush. Listen to this !

« Chafed by the silent imputation, and inwardly troubled by so unaccountable a circumstance, the chief advanced to the side of the bed, and stooping, cast an incredulous look at the features, as if distrusting their reality. His daughter was dead. The unerring feeling of nature for a moment prevailed and the old warrior hid his eyes in sorrow. » How can a boy like such writing as that, pompous, inhuman, erring against every feeling of nature ? The boy does not like it, he disregards it. He understands that the daughter is dead, a fact plainly stated amid the majestic polysyllables, and that the chief is sorry. The boy goes on with the story and leaves it to the critics to worry about the style.

Cora and Alice are racing with death ! It is an exciting race which any full-blooded person will follow, must follow, fascinated to the end. The sophisticated reader condescends to watch it, is ensnared in the interest of it all, and then suddenly, Cooper calls his heroines « distressed females ». That is almost fatal ; illusion wavers ; but the sensitive spectator grits his teeth, recovers and continues to watch. Cooper gets him and holds him in spite of everything. Meanwhile « distressed females » has not distracted the attention of the boy. (pp. 37-38)

To make up, as it were, for these unfavourable comments on Cooper's style, J. F. GENUNG and C. L. HANSON, in their *Outlines of Composition and Rhetoric* (Boston, Ginn & Co, 1915, pp. 260-61), select the scene of the arrival of Tamenund, at the end of chapter xxviii, as a fine instance of the art of description and exposition :

Notice how effectively, in the following extract from « The Last of the Mohicans, » Cooper makes use of exposition in a narrative to awaken and intensify the interest of the reader. The Indians are about to bring to trial their white captives, and the reader would be impatient of the usual matter-of-fact description of a solemn conclave. No one, however, can fail

to read every word of this exposition with growing interest. Cooper understood the art of story-telling, and especially how to make description and exposition play a part » (41).

In 1919 P. H. BOYNTON sides with the advocates of Cooper's Indians in his *History of American Literature* (42) :

To « The Last of the Mohicans » the verdict of time has awarded first place in the long roster of his works. It is the one book written by Cooper that is devoted most completely to the vanishing race... For many years it was a habit of critics to scoff at Cooper's Indian characters as romantic and idealized portraits of the red man. This judgment may have arisen during the period of Cooper's great unpopularity, when nothing was too unfair to please the American public [43], but, once said, it persisted and was quoted from decade to decade by people who cannot have read his books with any attention. It was insisted that the woodcraft with which Cooper endowed the Indians was beyond possibility, yet later naturalists have recorded time and again marvels quite as incredible as any in Cooper's pages. It was reiterated that their dignity, self-control, tribal loyalty, and reverence for age were overdrawn, yet many another authority has testified to the existence of these virtues. And, finally, it was charged that they were never such a heroic and superior people as Cooper made them, though study of his portraits will show that Cooper did not make them half as admirable as he is said to have done.

He next duly admires « the unschooled American... Natty Bumppo, central figure of the Leatherstocking Series », but strongly objects to the portrait of Montcalm as a type of Old World refinement and polish :

Quite in contrast to this « wildflower » is a potted plant, of whom Cooper is almost equally fond. This is the polished

(41) Further on (p. 285) the authors define *exposition* and *description* as follows: « Exposition is explanation... Description photographs; exposition explains the photograph. »

(42) Boston, Ginn & Co., pp. 145-49.

(43) This hypothesis is of course wrong, since the criticism of Cooper's Indians goes back to the Heckewelder Controversy, i. e. to 1826. See our main thesis chap. XI.

gentleman of the world, such as Montcalm, who embodies the culture and manners that the New World needed. Cooper admired such a one almost to the point of infatuation, but presented him very badly ; he made an idea of him rather than a living character, a veneer of manners without any solid backing, superficial, complacent and hollow. One feels no affection for him and very little respect. He annoys one by so evidently thanking God that he is not as other men.

As for the « females », they are rather explained away than defended :

The use of this word, which sounds odd and uncouth to-day, was general a hundred years ago, when « lady » was reserved to indicate a class distinction, and « woman » had not become the common noun ; but the change is not merely one of name, for the women of books and the women of life were far less self-reliant than the women of the twentieth century. Then they were frankly regarded not only as dependents but as inferiors... Cooper was by no means behind his time in his attitude, indeed, he was, if anything, rather ahead of it. His feeling for them seems to have been that expressed in the famous passage from « Marmion » of which the first half is usually all that is quoted :

O woman ! in our hours of ease
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
.....
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou !

In the ordinary situations in Cooper's novels his « females » were things to patronize and flatter... but in times of stress they showed heroic powers of endurance...

There was no evidence that Cora and Alice had minds ; they were not expected to ; instead they had warm hearts and « female beauty. » Lowell was probably not unfair in his comment :

And the women he draws from one model don't vary,
All sappy as maples and flat as a prairie...

But it must be admitted that in Cooper's time the model was a prevailing one, and that it was only in his old age that women began in any large numbers to depart from it.

In 1923, W. L. PHELPS also enters a plea for Cooper's Indians in his *Makers of American Literature* :

Even making due allowance for the romantic artist's privilege of idealization, I do not doubt that the basal traits of the Indian were correctly given by Cooper. Mr. Walter McClintock, who lived with the Blackfeet Indians and was adopted into their tribe, has in his books unconsciously given striking testimony in support of Cooper's attitude.

The tribute he pays to Hawkeye is certainly genuine, but it is to be regretted that it should have been paid once more at the expense of the Leatherstocking of the *Pioneers* :

In reversing time's flight with Leatherstocking, Cooper developed his own powers of creation in due proportion to the strength and activity of the hero. He had only faintly shadowed forth the man in *Pioneers*. In contrast to the strong, resourceful, alert and adroit Hawkeye, it is a shock to meet the later Nat Bumpo ; it is like meeting a friend after the lapse of years and finding his youth and strength gone and his fine spirit dulled. In *Pioneers* we have the picture of a rather ignorant and often plaintive man, who regrets the march of civilization. The ideal side is missing. Every boy is homesick for Hawkeye.

The praise of the « idyl » between Cora and Uncas is, on the other hand, rather overdone, in view of the very few hints which Cooper drops on the subject :

... the only love story in all his works that leaves a lasting impression is the love of Cora and the young Indian chief. It would seem that only when Cooper is close to Nature could he succeed in dealing with this natural passion. One would think it would be more difficult to portray love between a white girl and a savage than love between persons of similar race and breeding ; and so it would be for most writers. Cooper is the exception. There is something elemental in the love of Uncas and Cora that gives this idyl a fitting place in the epic narrative. Love, like all instincts, is unaware of artificial barriers and social laws ; in the universal language of youth heart speaks to heart. The delicacy and restraint shown by Cooper in creating and in dealing with this situation are in

marked contrast to the absurd modern cave-man and red-blood eruptions.

The defence of the woodcraft of Uncas, turning a rivulet out of its course in order to find the lost trail, is more vigorous than convincing :

No one enjoys Mark Twain's humor more than I ; but here we are forced to believe that in dealing with Cooper he preferred to make a joke rather than to give the facts. The matter would be of little importance were it not that Mark's attack on Cooper is fundamentally serious and is based on examples which he has misquoted. In the above passage, Chingachgook, or Chicago, becomes Uncas : instead of turning a running stream out of its course, he raked the earth across a turbid little rill which trickled from a spring. The mocassin tracks were not there, and there was no current to wash them away ; but after the trickle had been diverted, and the moist little bed dried, there was — to the sharp eye of Uncas — a faint print of a moccasin.

As for Cooper's style, it is judged in a truly broad-minded manner :

One of his recent editors has culled the following phrases, which must be almost the worst English that can be found in a masterpiece of fiction... « The eyes of the old man opened heavily, and he once more looked upwards at the multitude. As the piercing tones of the supplicant swelled on his ears, they moved slowly in the direction of her person, and finally settled there in a steady gaze. »

This passage escaped from Cooper's pen, then eluded him as he read the printed proofs, and survived the later editions of the book. It is as hardy as a typographical error.

Yet there are times, when the inspiration was strong, that Cooper's style displays a certain epic magnificence.

The last chapter of *Mohicans* reaches a height of dignity, and nobility (44).

In the *New York Bookman* for March 1924 (45), J. V. A. WEAVER imparts new life to the stale criticisms so often levelled

(44) Cf. *The Ladies' Home Journal*, January 1923, pp. 117-18.

(45) Cf. pp. 13-15.

at the improbabilities of the plot, at the conventionality of the heroines and at the helplessness of their would-be protector, major Heyward — as well as to the strictures of Mark Twain on Cooper's woodcraft and his stilted or inconsistent dialogue — by pretending to believe that the *Last of the Mohicans* is a burlesque, aiming at holding up to ridicule the Indian novels and their heroic white scouts, the latter being personified by Hawkeye, « the Ancient Boy Scout ».

This sophomoric piece of « debunking » can be read with an amused smile, but it is painful to realize that its preposterous conclusion has almost come true, owing to the « improvements » which well-meaning film producers have attempted to engraft on Cooper's masterpiece :

Such are the materials from which will evidently be made, and soon, we trust, one of the slapstick masterpieces of the silver screen. Let us hope for an all star cast. Let us suggest Louise Fazenda and Mabel Normand for Cora and Alice ; Harold Lloyd for Magua ; Bull Montana for Chingachgook ; Charlie Chaplin for Munro ; Buster Keaton for Uncas ; and Ben Turpin for Hawkeye. Only so thoroughly capable a company can do justice to this novel's antic possibilities.

In 1927, LUCY L. HAZARD, the author of *The Frontier in American Literature* (46), adds her name to the long list of modern critics who defend both Cooper's Indians and Cooper's « females » as depicted in the *Mohicans*.

Finally, in 1933, ALBERT KEISER gives a very favourable account of the *Mohicans* in his book on *The Indian in American Literature* (47), although recognizing that Uncas « is probably the most idealized red man in the works of Cooper » and that Magua's « manifestations of anger... reach the limits of the permissible. »

(46) New York, Crowell, pp. 100 and 101.

(47) New York, Oxford Press, pp. 122-28.

England

Lounsbury's statement to the effect that the Mohicans were even more warmly received in Europe than in America (1) is fully borne out by a survey of the first English reviews of the work. As a rule, English critics seem to have been so impressed by the originality of the Indian setting, and by that of the forest scenes, that they saw fit to dismiss as minor faults most of the defects dwelt upon by their younger brethren across the Atlantic.

As early as April 1st, 1826, the *Literary Gazette* (2) adopts a tone contrasting greatly with the one it had employed in its ill-natured review of *Lionel Lincoln* :

This is not the first time we have had to express our very cordial approval of Mr. Cooper's productions ; and the volumes before us will, we think, do any thing but diminish the just reputation of the American novelists (sic). Never was the character, the original and interesting character of the native Indians so well, so truly, and so vividly drawn as in his pages.

They are not heroes of romance, talking cockney sentiment, as if taking a moonlight row in a boat from Battersea ; but the real stern sons of the woods, whose wild passions, like race-horses, burst into fiercer flight for their temporary restraint : we feel their individuality.

The merits of Cooper as a story-teller are, of course, duly recognized, but he is said to have been still more successful as a painter of character :

The narrative part of the present work is wrought up

(1) Cf. p. 52.

(2) Cf. pp. 198-200.

with unfluctuating interest ; but certainly the skill with which the characters are drawn and developed, is where the author's talents have been the most strikingly successful. The English Scout, alias Haw-eye (sic), alias la Longue Carabine, is brought into admirable contrast with the simple, yet in his way, generous David Gamut, the psalm-singer ; and these with the young, the generous, the heroic Uncas, would of themselves be sufficient to establish the fame of any novelist.

The first rescue of the heroines is then quoted at length, but the reviewer is careful to note that this scene is « only one among many of similar attraction » ; after which he concludes as follows :

If unabating interest, vivid portraiture of character, most admirable scenic description — if these are criterions of talents, we may then most cordially recommend the *Last of the Mohicans* to our readers.

At the end of the same month, the *Panoramic Miscellany* (3) also begins by praising both the originality and the accuracy of the Indian scenes :

Whoever has read, with any attention, the various books of travels, &c. descriptive of the American Indians, cannot but have seen that there is an almost inexhaustible fund of materials, for romantic and wild incident, open to the novelist, in their modes of life, their characters and adventures which a fertile and well regulated imagination, might readily work up into narratives of intense interest. The author of the present work appears to have been fully aware of this ; and, in availing himself of the knowledge derived from history, tradition and personal observation, has presented the world with a work abounding in originality... The principal adventures may have been witnessed or may have been gleaned from record, or tradition ; but the delineations of character, the descriptions of the manners, the customs and the instincts of the Indians, must be ascribed to authorial talent. That they have been drawn from actual nature, is apparent ; but from nature, observed with an acute and perceptive eye, that could avail itself of a minute acquaintance with the wild-wood race of hunters and

(3) Cf. April 30, 1826, pp. 533-34.

warriors described. We consider these volumes, therefore, as supplying a desideratum, not only in *novelist*, but in historical literature : — as presenting a more vivid and familiar picture of the true character of the Indians, than we have yet been favoured with.

Cooper is next congratulated on the objectivity of his narrative :

They [the Indians] are brought before us in their own persons, and the tale has all the air of a drama of realities. The author is nowhere prominent. He lays open the scene and the action proceeds before us, without comment of prejudice or panegyric.

The portrait of Hawkeye is pronounced a masterpiece :

Among the characters, the principal is that of the Scout — a man of European race, who has spent thirty years of his life, as a roving hunter, among the Indians, and has imbibed their habits, and to a certain degree, their instincts ; and the mixture of rude civilization with the attained wildness, and, as we should call it, superhuman agility of the wild woodman, is a masterpiece of delineation seldom equalled : and while, to the very last page, the character is sustained with such consistency, as to keep the interest of the work unabated.

The only regret expressed by the reviewer concerns the tragic ending of the story, but one should bear in mind that this is not presented as a criticism :

...the termination shows the author to be more attentive to probability, than to the *sympathies* of ordinary novel readers.

The *Lady's Magazine* for April (4) — like the *Literary Gazette* — quotes the first rescue of Cora and Alice, but the introductory paragraph is rather patronizing in tone :

The Americans have for some years endeavoured, with zeal and spirit, if not with complete success, to rival the

British novelists ; and Mr. Cooper is not undistinguished among these aspirants to celebrity. He has not, indeed, the greatest skill in plot or in composition, and he does not excite the most lively interest : but his narratives are amusing, his scenic descriptions are sometimes vivid, and he delineates and develops characters with considerable ability.

This passage, however, is but a mild instance of British self-sufficiency, and cannot be considered as a jarring note in the general concert of praise, while the sarcastic review of the *Mohicans* in the *London Magazine* for May (5) should be pointed out as a very significant exception — were it not that its author is most probably the Yankee Aristarchus JOHN NEAL ! (6)

From the very outset the bark — and bite — of John Neal are recognizable :

The *Last of the Mohicans* is clearly by much the worst of Mr. Cooper's performances. He has for several years past littered annually, and in fecundity at least, if in no rarer quality, has proved himself a genuine descendant of his great English father, beyond the salt-water lake. The family-failing too, is as conspicuous in the American, as in the parent tree — the produce has grown worse and worse every year ; it is now dry, jejune, and trashy. No writer, indeed, be he great or little, known or unknown, can be trusted long with the duty of manufacturing fictions for the public. The workmanship, after a time, is certain to deteriorate with every successive experiment ; for a novelist writes first to please himself, and next to please the public ; and when his name has become current in the market, he writes for a purpose needless to mention.

Curiously enough, the style is first dealt with as constituting « the first symptom of deterioration » :

Mr. Cooper has never discovered much ease and spirit, and has always resembled his Waverley father most in the parts that have most evidently been written by the latter invita

(5) Cf. p. 27.

(6) Professor CAIRNS thought so, and there is evidence that Neal wrote for the *London Magazine*. Cf. F. L. PATTEE, *American Writers*, Duke Univ. Press, 1937, p. 12.

Minervâ ; but though heavy and tedious, his style was still free from the grosser faults of American composition. In this work, however, the native taste is indemnified by an unrestrained indulgence ; and the arts of amplification and circumlocution are exemplified in every page... Mr. Cooper may find some excuse for his propensity to amplify, though none for his slip-slop in the example of his great father, who is but too apt to load his style with similar redundancies, and is a dangerous model to imitate. But there is this difference between the author of *Waverley* and his American follower, that the former, in his descriptive flourishes, shows himself an amateur of nature, whilst the latter proves himself only an amateur of the author of *Waverley*.

The improbabilities of the plot soon come in, however, for their share of sarcastic disparagement :

The story is a tissue of common-place Indian adventures, abounding with hair-breadth escapes and surprisals. Fancy has entire possession of the field, and it is seldom that any thing occurs which looks like the result of observation and experience... The improbabilities of the author's great prototype are generally reserved for the last volume, and are then dispatched with a haste that shows at least the writer's sense of his own weakness in the art of constructing a story... But Mr. Cooper is not at the pains even to defer the evil which he cannot remedy. Improbabilities crowd in upon us from the outset ; and, indeed, it is to a series of them that we owe the whole tissue of the subsequent adventures.

As for the characters, they are passed over in a disdainful silence, with the exception of Hawkeye, who seems to have been deemed a fit butt for the reviewer's wit :

[Leatherstocking] a hunter of the woods, European by birth, but Indian in his habits, and so like a red man in every respect, that he deems it incumbent upon him to end almost every speech with the assurance that, notwithstanding appearances, he is a white man born, and without a cross in his blood... Leatherstocking... appears in his youth to have been a very silly, prating, garrulous character, and possessed of but few of the recommendations which on his first appearance conciliated for him some portion of the reader's regard. A scout, a tracker of Indians by the trail, and engaged in the

warfare of the woods, he is a proser as intolerable as Dugald Dalgetty, among the Children of the Mist, and ought to have shared a similar fate. Always talking, he is always enjoining silence, and he keeps up an incessant cackle that would have been sure to bring half the Indians of the forest upon his trail.

By way of compensation, the *Monthly Review* for June (7) publishes an elaborate and very favourable appreciation of the Mohicans. The author — who prides himself upon his knowledge of the North American Indians — waxes eloquent in his praise of Cooper's pictures of Indian life and customs :

He has here attempted to offer a picture of Indian character and life ; and we may be justified, by a personal acquaintance with the aboriginal tribes of the North-American wilderness which falls to the lot of few Europeans, in pronouncing with confidence that it is a representation of admirable fidelity. That the author has availed himself of the narrative of John Hunter and of the notices of the missionary Heckewelder, is extremely probable ; but we are convinced that the tale could never have been written, with the peculiar graphic truth which marks every page of his delineations of Indian manners, unless he had himself mingled with the red children of his country's forests. Elaborate relations of their general usages, and even imitations of their nervous and figurative language, might be copied from books : but here we have a thousand little peculiarities of habit, gesture, tone, and attitude, thrown as it were incidentally and unconsciously into the narrative, but which could not possibly have been noted except by familiar and watchful observance from the life. We are particular in remarking the easy and perpetual recurrence of these little characteristic touches, because they serve to determine the pretensions of the work to the highest praise which can be bestowed upon it. They certify that it is all that it claims to be, — an authentic exhibition of the wildest and most fearfully romantic state of society, which the world has ever known.

The portraits of Magua and of the two Mohicans are, later on, justified as follows :

Mr. Cooper will not be accused, by those at least who

(7) Cf. pp. 122-31.

know any thing of the Indian character, of having, with any undue and foolish partiality for the virtues of savage life, depicted it too favourably for truth. But as in Magua he has displayed all the worst and most revolting features of the Indian mind, so may his portraits of the two Mohicans, Chingachgook and Uncas, be received as accurately representing in their persons all that is dignified and estimable, — and the amount of this is far from small, — in the simple children of the take and forest. The character of the younger warrior, Uncas, may, indeed, in one respect, be thought a little to overstep the probabilities of Indian feeling. Mr. Cooper has evidently had some sentimental inclination, although it is scarcely more than half developed, to inspire him with a passion for Cora, « the dark hair, » of the Munros ; and, in keeping with this underplay, he has ascribed to his temperament throughout more gentleness, even feminine gentleness, than our experience would amalgamate with the stern bearing of a young warrior who had already made himself the terror of his enemies.

Hawkeye, on the other hand, is welcome without any reservation :

...the white hunter, who is introduced to us only by his *noms de guerre* of Hawk-eye and La Longue Carabine, is a specimen (of the better sort, indeed,) of a class of men still to be found in the American forests. His qualities are adroitly elicited by a hundred little characteristic niceties of opinion and action, which, though perhaps they might not be quite understood by our home-bred readers, are all struck off from the original with most admirable tact. In the strange mixture of the habits of civilised and Indian life, the corresponding confusion of moral opinions and principles, an enthusiastic respect for the finer qualities of the red people, coupled always with the superior pride of pure European blood, and the perpetual boast of being « a man without a cross ; » in all these points, he who is familiar with the population of the American forests will at once recognise Hawk-eye for the true exemplar of a whole class. He is the genuine representative of the white hunter, who has naturalised himself among the red people, preserving some of the lingering traits and humaner features of civilised man, but acquiring the stern insensibility to danger and suffering, the patient endurance of privation, the suppleness and activity of limb, and even in part the wonderful sagacity of the senses, by which the native warrior supports and guards his life, and tracks out his path in the

darkness, and solitude, and bewildering mazes of his gigantic forests.

Among the defects of the novel are mentioned the improbabilities met with in the opening chapters, and the « needlessly tragical » ending, but the reviewer's tone is always sympathetic, even when the accumulation of scenes of horror is criticized as constituting Cooper's chief fault :

The structure of the tale itself is sufficiently simple, but the narrative is frequently worked up to an intensity of horror and an agony of suspense which are really much more than interesting : the anxiety of the reader becomes engrossed, and his imagination excited, in many of the situations of the story, to a degree which is absolutely painful. Indeed it is a positive fault in the romance that the personages, for whom our sympathies are keenly awakened, encounter one unrelieved and perpetual crisis of terrific danger through three whole volumes of adventure... The first volume is filled with the thrilling details of an encounter with the Indians, which should seem to terminate, after a quick succession of imminent perils and as many sudden escapes, in the temporary safety of the rescued victims. These adventures are conceived with vivid invention, and the circumstances are told with amazing animation and force of description. Through this first volume we are led by the author in breathless rapid interest : our attention is never off the stretch ; and yet we seek no relief, until we have seen the objects of our sympathy beyond their first series of dangers. But then it is that we encounter the prominent defect of the work. The second volume resembles the first, and the third is a repetition of the second. Without respite, without variety of interest, and almost without any change of scene, machinery, or action, we are led in an uniformity of horror through two volumes more of Indian ambushes, pursuits, battles, massacres, and scalplings.

Early in July, the *British Critic* (8) and the *Liverpool Repository* (9) publish more or less detailed analyses of the plot, couched in favourable terms, while MISS MITFORD writes to Hayden the letter containing the well-known passage :

(8) Cf. p. 436.

(9) Cf. pp. 385-401.

Have you read Cooper's novel, « The Last of the Mohicans ? » I like it better than any of Scott's, except the three first and the « Heart of Mid-Lothian ; » and it interests me more even than those, as giving a true and new picture of a new and great people. How wonderfully America is rising in the scale of intellect ! (10)

At the end of the month, the *Literary Chronicle* (11) speaks of « the admirable dramatis personæ of this inimitable tale » and praises the Indian atmosphere in very warm terms :

The Last of the Mohicans is one of the ablest expositions of Indian life we ever remember to have met with ; it abounds in spirited portraits ; and the red man, amid his interminable forests, is presented to our view, rich in his natural qualifications of activity and strength, noble thought, and generous devotedness. We are at once transported to the wilds of the great northern continent, and the far-spreading lake, the massive impervious woods ranged by the bounding deer, and the swart lineaments of the native inhabitant, glowing with his local pride, come before our vision, clad in their uncivilized majesty of mien.

The conclusion is worth quoting for its outspoken sincerity, and also for the rather unexpected praise of the moral lesson which the critic reads into the story :

Thus we have paid our sincere tribute of admiration to the work before us : our's is not the pampered praise of venality, but the unbiassed effervescence of unmixed delight. The Last of the Mohicans is calculated (independently of its admirable authorship) to instruct as well as to amuse, — to teach us that a red breast may inshrine as rich and as noble a heart as a white one, and, though the hues may differ, Nature, in the plenitude of her bounty, has not made that disgraceful difference which the sons of civilization would wish to affirm, — that in all her works she is the same beneficent mistress, spurning the transitory acquirements of man, and shaming with the actions of the savage the deeds of the cultivated.

(10) Cf. *Life and Letters*, by A. G. L'ESTRANGE, London, 1870, vol. 2, p. 226. The letter is dated July 11th 1826.

(11) Cf. July 29, 1826, pp. 469-73.

In August 1826, the *Liverpool Repository* (12) publishes favourable comments on the *Mohicans*, as a sequel to its detailed analysis of the preceding month :

We have given copious extracts from, rather than comments on, the work, in order that our readers may be enabled to form their own opinion concerning it. It affords us much greater pleasure to commend than to blame ; and therefore, as regards the narrative we have gone through, we hesitate not to recommend it as a production worthy of their perusal... If the *Last of the Mohicans* be not so classical as the Waverley novels, it is written in good English and French, with but few typographical and grammatical errors, and some trifling defects in style, and although this work is a little tinged with theological controversy, the author treats such subjects with greater respect and solemnity than his Scotch contemporary; who frequently bandies about biblical quotations as he would do common-place jokes, or utters them through the medium of the most worthless characters of the piece, on the most unsuitable occasions.

Finally, in August 1827, a belated but very flattering review of the *Mohicans* appears in the *London Literary Gazette* (13), extolling once more the Indian scenes :

The story is most interesting ; and as it proceeds, the customs and manners of the Indian warriors, their modes of warfare... all these, and much more, are detailed in the beautiful story of the *Last of the Mohicans*... The end of the story brings us to the respective towns of the Delawares and Maquas ; and there we have presented to us a most interesting account of the manners and customs of the whole assembled population of men, women, and children. The attack on the Maquas... is admirably described...

Whoever reads this beautiful tale cannot fail to admire it ; and although literature is only in its spring-time in America, the works of Washington Irving and Cooper, will survive their authors, and be long read with delight.

Beginning with 1827, incidental appreciations of the

(12) Cf. pp. 449-50.

(13) Cf. August 25, 1827, pp. 182-83.

Mohicans are naturally to be found in the articles dealing with Cooper's works as a whole, but they are less numerous than in America, and in general less favourable than the earlier reviews.

A short passage, in the *New Monthly Magazine* for July 1st 1827, is an exception from the latter point of view :

His « Last of the Mohicans » is a succession of splendid scenes in the woods, more soft and luxurious than his former works, and perhaps of higher character than any of them ; but all made out with the same spirit of literal accuracy in the detail, which, however extraordinary may be the facts or manners portrayed, renders it almost as impossible to doubt their truth, as if we had ourselves seen them. (14)

On the other hand, the *Edinburgh Review* for October 1829 (15) indulges in a few ill-natured allusions to the Mohicans, in connection with its criticism of the excessive minuteness of Cooper's descriptions :

Mr. Cooper describes things to the life, but he puts no motion into them. While he is insisting on the minutest details, and explaining all the accompaniments of an incident, the story stands still. The elaborate accumulation of particulars serves not to embody his imagery, but to distract and impede the mind. He is not so much the master of his materials as their drudge : He labours under an epilepsy of the fancy. He thinks himself bound in his character of novelist to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Thus, if two men are struggling on the edge of a precipice for life or death, he goes not merely into the vicissitudes of action and passion as the chances of the combat vary ; but stops to take an inventory of the geography of the place, the shape of the rock, the precise attitude and display of the limbs and muscles, with the eye and habits of a sculptor. Mr. Cooper does not seem to be aware of the infinite divisibility of mind and matter ; and that an « abridgment » is all that is possible or desirable in the most individual representation. A person who is so determined, may write volumes on a grain of sand or an insect's wing. Why describe the dress and appearance of an

(14) Cf. p. 80. The article deals with Chateaubriand and Cooper.

(15) Cf. pp. 128-29. In a review of W. E. CHANNING's, *Sermons and Tracts*.

Indian chief, down to his tobacco-stopper and button-holes ? It is mistaking the province of the artist for that of the historian ; and it is this very obligation of painting and statuary to fill up all the details, that renders them incapable of telling a story, or of expressing more than a single moment, group, or figure. Poetry or romance does not descend into the particulars, but atones for it by a more rapid march and an intuitive glance at the more striking results. By considering truth or matter-of-fact as the sole element of popular fiction, our author fails in massing and in impulse. In the midst of great vividness and fidelity of description, both of nature and manners, there is a sense of jejuneness, — for half of what is described is insignificant and indifferent ; there is a hard outline, — a little manner ; and his most striking situations do not tell as they might and ought, from his seeming more anxious about the mode and circumstances than the catastrophe. In short, he anatomizes his subjects ; and his characters bear the same relation to living beings that the botanic specimens collected in a portfolio do to the living plant or tree. The sap does not circulate kindly ; nor does the breath of heaven visit, or its dews moisten them. Or, if Mr. Cooper gets hold of an appalling circumstance, he, from the same tenacity and thralldom to outward impressions, never lets it go : He repeats it without end. Thus, if he once hits upon the supposition of a wild Indian's eyes glaring through a thicket, every bush is from that time forward furnished with a pair ; the page is studded with them, and you can no longer look about you at ease or in safety. The high finishing we have spoken of is particularly at variance with the rudeness of the materials. In Richardson it was excusable, where all was studied and artificial ; but a few dashes of red ochre are sufficient to paint the body of a savage chieftain ; nor should his sudden and frantic stride on his prey be treated with the precision and punctiliousness of a piece of still life. (16)

(16) By an unfortunate mistake, this passage, freely translated by PHILARÈTE CHASLES and incorporated in his *Collected Works*, (*Etudes sur la littérature et les mœurs des Anglo-Américains au XIX^e siècle*, Paris, 1851, pp. 51-52) has been discussed as an instance of French criticism by both G. D. MORRIS and Miss M. M. GIBB.

Mr. Morris goes even so far as to say : « Personne, à notre connaissance, n'a parlé plus spirituellement de la prolixité de Cooper... C'est une critique très insuffisante, une boutade plutôt qu'une appréciation sérieuse. Frappé surtout par un seul défaut de Cooper, réel d'ailleurs, M. Chasles l'exagère au point de déformer l'aspect total de son œuvre. »

A year later, the *Spirit of Literature* (17) considers that Cooper's predilection for chases and pursuits is carried to extremes in the Mohicans :

The thing which Mr. Cooper seems principally partial to is a chase. The plot of the « Spy » consists in the perpetual hunt after Harvey Birch, diversified with occasional pursuit of the other characters. It is in the « Last of the Mohicans, » however, that the passion is pushed to its fullest extent. An Indian chief falls in love with an European lady, at the beginning of the first volume ; she sets out on a journey through the woods, and he pursues her. At the end of the first volume she is caught, but rescued by her friends ; and, about the middle of the second *safely* deposited in Fort William Henry (commanded by her father, an old Scotchman) and at that moment besieged by the French. The French, assisted by the Indians, take it ; off goes the chief with the lady, and off go her friends in pursuit. At the beginning of the third volume they overtake him ; the tables are turned, a new flight begins, and the chief again becomes the hunter. At length the author finds he is at the end of the third volume, and no nearer the end of the race than at the first chapter ; he accordingly cuts the Gordian knot, which he finds it impossible to untie, and drops the curtain by unceremoniously killing the principal characters. It should be observed, however, in justice to Mr. Cooper, that the incidents of this tale are so lively, that the defects of the plot, if it can be called a plot, are easily forgiven.

The critic, on the other hand, approves of the general admiration for the Indian scenes, and explains why the re-appearance of Leatherstocking is not to be accounted a blemish :

...the delineations of Indian life fully justify the partiality of the public for this romance, preferred by many to all its kindred. Here Natty Bumppo, the old hunter of the Pioneers, appears again on the scene, as he also does in the following scenes. By some the author has been censured for this ; but by most, and ourselves amongst them, approved. He has the example of Shakespeare on his side, and, still more, the pleasure he affords his readers...

(17) Cf. October 30, 1830, pp. 426-27. (In a review of the *Water Witch*.)

This would, indeed, be objectionable, if one story were so intertwined with the other that neither singly formed a whole ; but this is a fault which our author carefully avoids.

At the time of Cooper's death, the Mohicans are generally represented in England as his best work. This opinion is voiced, for instance, by the *Athenæum* for October 4, 1851 :

There are critics — and we are of the number — who prefer « The Last of the Mohicans » to « The Pilot » or « The Spy. » It may want the race and freshness of the one, and the peculiar interest appertaining to the other, — but then it has another peculiar interest of its own, and points of character and of description not to be found with so much force and beauty in perhaps any other of its author's works. (18)

The same point of view is adopted by the *Eclectic Review* for April 1852, but the writer — or rather the compiler — of the article seems to have copied the *Athenæum* in haste, and without weighing his own words (19) :

Many readers have preferred the *Last of the Mohicans*... to others which have obtained a greater share of notoriety ; and we ourselves are inclined to award it a higher place amongst Cooper's works than has generally been assigned it. It may be deficient in the intense interest that characterizes the *Pilot* or the *Spy* ; but it possesses a peculiar charm in the more quiet but sustained tone of feeling that pervades it throughout. The characters are distinctive and new, and the description of nature and of men is beautiful in the extreme.

In December of the same year, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (20) is far more original in the tribute which it pays the Mohicans, notwithstanding its criticism of the Indian descriptions from the standpoint of historical accuracy :

To Cooper we are disposed to assign the credit — for success in fiction is every way creditable — of having misled

(18) Cf. p. 1047.

(19) Cf. p. 415. This review was reprinted in the New York *Eclectic Magazine* (pp. 207-13) in June 1852.

(20) Cf. pp. 681-82.

the civilised world for a long time with regard to the habits of the Redskins. Cooper is a great author. We say so in the gravest earnest ; for several of his earlier fictions have taken a hold of the public mind in a wonderful degree, and those who have read them in their youth, cannot forget them in their maturity. That he is a most unequal writer may be allowed. Some of his novels are so heavy that it is severe work to wade through them ; and some of them, again, are absolutely childish and maudlin. But, in his best days, he was a grand fellow in the prairie or the forest ; and *The Last of the Mohicans* is a work which any man might be proud to have written. Many years have elapsed since we read that book — and it may be we shall never read it again, for the recollection and impression of it is still so strong within us, that we almost fear another perusal might destroy somewhat of the charm which still haunts us whenever we hear its name ; — but well do we remember the Sagamore, and Uncas, and Natty Bumppo, and the rest of the characters that figured in that fascinating tale. It was not only the sagacity of the Indian « on the trail » that then struck us with amazement, or the almost superhuman development of the more physical attributes — but the wisdom, the philosophy, the retinence (sic), the justice, and the self-denial of the untutored children of the desert. Young as we were when we read that tale — not less credited than many a truer story — we could not help asking ourselves whether, if savage life could produce so many instances, not of valour only, or of improved instinct, but of profound estimate of character and design, civilisation could add much to the mental development, or the happiness of the stoic of the woods. What was the use of putting any question of the kind ? Uncas was, undoubtedly, supposing him to be a real character, superior to any young man who had received a university education. Of the three great springs of human action — truth, duty, and interest — he acknowledged but two, refusing the more personal motive ; and, as Cooper depicts him in his splendid heathenness, he is unquestionably a more faultless being, as regards his mastery of the passions, and pure native feeling, than any character that can be extracted from the writings of pagan antiquity. In him the graces of chivalry mingle with unsullied nature. He is a compound of Antilochus and Sir Galahad — fearless as the one, and noble and tender as the other. But then Cooper was an educated and a Christian writer ; and where have we any assurance — or, in fact, reason — to suppose that his portraiture was drawn from the life ?

None at all. Cooper knew no more about the real habits

of the Red Indians, in their state of freedom, than did the late Lachlan MacTavish, distiller in Campbelltown, who forwarded to us not long ago a manuscript entitled, *The Last of the Assinaboins*, with a request that we would publish it as a serial in our « world-renowned periodical. »

After a lapse of twenty more years, there is no longer any hesitation in the English mind as to the superiority of the Mohicans over all the other novels of Cooper, as is shown by a statement of CH. D. YONGE in *Three Centuries of English Literature* (21) :

An English critic can hardly know which are held in the greatest esteem among his own countrymen ; but among English readers « *The Last of the Mohicans* » is considered his masterpiece.

At the end of the century, the situation is still unchanged, if we are to believe MOWBRAY MORRIS in his introduction to Macmillan's edition of the Mohicans (22) :

By common consent these five Leather-Stocking Tales have been placed at the head of Cooper's work, and of the five *The Last of the Mohicans* has always, I suppose, been the popular favourite. Cooper himself is reputed to have given the preference to both *The Deerslayer* and *The Pathfinder*, and many critics have agreed with him... But the general voice would probably still be given for the earlier tale ; and, surely, if the interest of *The Pathfinder*, be tremendous, it would be difficult to find an adequate epithet for the preponderance of that quality in *The Last of the Mohicans*. There is hardly another work of fiction in which the interest is so unflagging, so breathless, so bewildering almost, one is tempted to say.

In addition to this flattering statement, Mowbray Morris praises Cooper's skilful use of history :

How literally Cooper has here followed the course of history was perhaps never understood in England till Mr. Park-

(21) Cf. p. 619. The above extract is quoted by C. W. MOULTON (*Literary Criticism*, vol. 5, p. 685).

(22) Cf. London, 1900.

man told the tale again, with a force and picturesqueness that Cooper himself has not surpassed, in the pages of *Montcalm and Wolfe*. That admirable work is indeed at once the best commentary on the novel and its best confirmation... Romance added nothing to history, and history found nothing to add or to alter in romance.

With regard to character-drawing, Lowell's « sweeping charge » is reduced to humbler proportions :

.... beyond all question Cooper drew Nature with a surer, perhaps because with a more loving, hand than he could bring to Man. It is the common reproach that his characters are conventional, mere mechanical accessories to the story and to the great panorama of lake and forest and stream which he could paint in a fashion which no man who has used the medium of prose has bettered since. But for the characters, when we have put aside Natty Bumppo (to give the hunter his own name) and the Mohican Chingachgook, did Cooper ever, it is asked, succeed in fashioning another being of human flesh and blood ? Lowell, when he wrote his *Fable for Critics*, would not even allow the Indian.

He has drawn you one character, though, that is new,
 One wildflower he's plucked that is wet with the dew
 Of this fresh Western world, and the thing not to mince,
 He has done naught but copy it ill ever since ;
 His Indians, with proper respect be it said,
 Are just Natty Bumppo, daubed over with red...

Lowell was a young man when he wrote those lines, and as is the way with some clever young men, more intent possibly on being praised for the wit than the justice of his criticism ; it is always easier to make the crowd laugh than to make it think, and Cooper, we must remember, was not popular with his countrymen.

The question of the idealization of Chingachgook and Uncas is handled in the spirit of Lounsbury's biography :

It has often been said that in Chingachgook and Uncas Cooper idealised the North American savage out of all semblance of reality ; and no doubt Magua and Arrowhead come nearer to our notions of the Red Indian... This, however, is

a question which it is impossible to settle now — It may be taken, I suppose, as certain that no Indian brave even remotely resembling the Great Serpent could be found to-day throughout the length and breadth of North America ; but it does not necessarily follow that some such might not have existed a century and a half ago before the blessings of civilization had been imported into the wigwams of the West. We are told at any rate that Cooper spared no pains to study the Indian character on every available opportunity... At least, as Mr. Lounsbury justly observes, literature has gained, if it be at the expense of truth.

Even the heroines are defended to a certain extent, since Mowbray Morris attributes their conventionality to Cooper's defective style :

And again, in his female characters, in which he is supposed to have most signally failed, he has, I think, been too unsparingly condemned. Many of his heroines are, in truth, as the phrase goes now, somewhat anæmic in their humanity — a charge which has, as we know, been also brought against Walter Scott...

The truth perhaps is that the conventionality of Cooper's characters lies not so much in themselves as in the language in which they are made to express themselves. This is often, more often perhaps than not, inordinately prolix and pompous; men and women, old and young, they use a fashion of speech which can never yet have been current in any society upon this earth. Cooper was no artist in words. What we call style... may come by instinct, or may be laboriously acquired. It certainly did not come by instinct to Cooper, and as certainly he gave no pains to acquire it.

Finally, in 1919, D. H. LAWRENCE deals with the Mohicans in connection with his original theories concerning race extermination and the Spirit of Place, but, unfortunately for Cooper, the Mohicans do not readily fit in with these theories :

The Last of the Mohicans brings us back to the trees and the lakes, the Delawares, and the white men. But in this book Cooper again seeks a pretext for his plot. He must describe

(23) Cf. *The English Review*, March 1919, pp. 210-13.

actual historical events, and, hanging on to the skirts of history, hamper and spoil his natural movement. Perhaps *The Last of the Mohicans* is the most imperfect of all the Leatherstocking books, the most broken, hesitating as it does between historical narrative, desire for verity, and the true impulse of pure imaginative, creative revelation. It is not till the book passes away from contact with history and white man's settlement and enters the confines of the Red Man that it expands into sheer significance.

This significance is to be found, on the one hand in the frustration of the wishes of Cora's red lovers (Uncas and Magua) and, on the other hand, in the soul communion of Hawkeye and Chingachgook :

Magua, Uncas, and Cora all die a violent death. There is to be no marriage between the last fiery slips of the Red and the White race — no marriage in the flesh. So we read the art-symbolology. In the passionate physical reality both races die. Even the vivid and wicked Magua is shot in mid-air, and his beautiful if destructive body falls extinct like a meteorite. It is strange and appalling in this book that twice the hostile Indians are shot from overhead, and plunge down almost as from the skies into death, struck by the bullet of the inevitable white-hunter. They are the destroyed sun-children. Natty, in his fearful and unerring aim, is the mystic destroyer of the Red Man out of life...

And over and above all this turmoil of loving and fighting and killing and dying we have the two impressive figures of the middle-aged men, Natty and Chingachgook. They are the dual centre of all the whirl of life. All the tides of death and marriage and birth seem to turn about their stable polarity. Two mature, silent, expressionless men, they stand on opposite shores of being, and their love, the inexpressible conjunction between them, is the bridge over the chasm.

Each of them is alone, and, since the death of Uncas, conclusive, concluded in himself. They are isolated, final instances of their race : two strangers, from opposite ends of the earth, meeting now, beholding each other, and balanced in unspeakable conjunction — a love so profound, or so abstract, that it is unexpressed ; it has no word or gesture of inter-communion. It is communicated by pure presence alone, without contact of word or touch. This perfect relationship,

this last abstract love, exists between the two isolated instances of opposite race.

And this is the inception of a new race. Beyond all expression, save the pure communion of *presence*, the abstract love of these two beings consummates itself in an unimaginable coalescence, the inception of a new psyche, a new race-soul that rises out of the last and first unknowable intercommunion of two untranslatable souls. That which Chingachgook was, Natty was not ; nor could he ever know. In the same way, Natty himself was the untranslatable unknown to Chingachgook. Yet across this insuperable gulf in being there passed some strange communion between the two instances, invisible, intangible, unknowable — a quality of pure unknowable embrace. And out of this embrace arises the strange wing-covered seraph of new race-being. From this communion is procreated a new race-soul, which henceforth gestates within the living humanity of the West (24).

(24) It should be added that the above passages were entirely re-written, and in a far less poetical key, when Lawrence published his essays in book form.

The comments on the heroines in the later version are worth quoting :

« For the first time we get actual women : the dark, handsome Cora and her frail sister, the White Lily. The good old division, the dark sensual woman and the clinging, submissive little blonde, who is so « pure »...

Cora is the scarlet flower of womanhood, fierce, passionate offspring of some mysterious union between the British officer and a Creole woman in the West Indies. Cora loves Uncas, Uncas loves Cora. But Magua also desires Cora, violently desires her. A lurid little circle of sensual fire. So Fenimore kills them all off, Cora, Uncas, and Magua, and leaves the White Lily to carry on the race. She will breed plenty of white children to Major Heyward. These firesome « lilies that fester », of our day. »

France

Like the first English critics, the French reviewers did not, as a rule, see fit to devote much space to the defects of the *Mohicans*, while they took care to insist on the originality and power of the novel.

Their admiration of the Indian scenes, however, seems to have been less genuine, less intense ; but, as a compensation, they generally maintained that such scenes proved that the « American Scott » was not a mere disciple of the great Scotchman.

Le Corsaire for May 5, 1826 does not even praise the Indian scenes as such, but probably means to include them in its flattering comments on the historical value of the novel :

L'histoire des Etats-Unis à l'époque où ces contrées, habitées par des tribus sauvages, furent envahies par les Européens, vient de fournir à M. Cooper, surnommé à juste titre le Walter Scott Américain, bien que s'il imite parfois l'auteur des Puritains, ce soit toujours avec l'indépendance du génie, et que ses imitations portent l'empreinte d'une création aussi hardie que brillante, la matière d'un nouvel ouvrage qu'on publie aujourd'hui sous le titre du *Dernier des Mohicans*... le *Dernier des Mohicans* nous paraît devoir encore ajouter à la réputation de Cooper ; c'est partout l'attrait du roman uni à l'intérêt de l'histoire... Peu d'époques historiques furent plus fécondes en événemens que celle qu'il [Cooper] a choisie, aussi en a-t-il su tirer un parti avantageux, y saisir des scènes, des situations d'un intérêt puissant, et dessiner un vaste drame dont toutes les parties sont liées avec autant d'art que d'habileté. M. Cooper est un peu plus qu'un romancier.

A few days later, *La Pandore* (1) also speaks very highly of the historical element in the Mohicans :

Le dernier des Mohicans est bien plutôt une histoire qu'un roman ; c'est un ouvrage estimable, instructif jusqu'à un certain point, et que je ne balance pas de mettre au-dessus de beaucoup de romans historiques fort prônés.

The Indian element, however, is, this time, distinctly praised — though in a humorous way :

Rien de plus simple et de moins compliqué que la fable de ce roman ; rien de plus bizarre, de plus extraordinaire et de plus local que les détails, vétilleux à l'excès, sans pourtant être insipides, qu'il renferme en si grand nombre... vous êtes au milieu des sauvages : vingt fois j'ai porté la main à ma tête pour m'assurer que la chevelure qui en fait l'ornement ne m'avait pas été enlevée par un Huron, un Delaware, ou un Iroquois.

As to the general judgment, it is couched in terms which Cooper might have felt proud of, had not the reviewer betrayed his slight acquaintance with the novel by speaking of Hawkeye and La Longue Carabine as totally different persons (2) :

Il serait superflu de prédire du succès à un livre de ce genre : ce succès il l'obtient déjà. Son excessive originalité, la bizarrerie, l'horreur même de certains détails de localité, demandent grâce pour quelques longueurs, pour quelques descriptions inutiles ou trop souvent répétées ; on doit aussi pardonner au traducteur un certain nombre de phrases péniblement agencées, ou de dimensions telles, qu'elles exposeraient à perdre haleine celui ou celle qui entreprendrait de lire à haute voix.

On May 18, *Le Globe* (p. 336) announces as follows an elaborate review which appeared a week later (3) :

(1) Cf. May 9, 1826, pp. 2-3.

(2) Cf. p. 3 : « ...la longue carabine, perfide Indien allié ...œil de faucon, homme blanc, plein de courage, d'adresse, de raison, »

(3) May 25, 1826, pp. 351-52.

Si quelquefois on a pu accuser le romancier américain de trop imiter Walter Scott, ici du moins il est original. Déjà, dans ses précédents ouvrages, toutes les scènes tirées de la vie sauvage avaient annoncé sa supériorité en ce genre. C'est à la fois une instruction vraie et variée, un sentiment profond ; et le roman réunit à l'intérêt dramatique l'attrait d'un voyage : nous ne connaissons point de livre meilleur sur les Indiens de l'Amérique du Nord. Dans un prochain article, nous essaierons d'en faire apprécier le mérite.

The review proper is less favourable than this announcement might lead one to expect. With regard to the plot, it is true that the critic (4) does not dwell on the « improbabilities » of the opening chapters, but the breathless interest so highly prized in America and England, passes almost unnoticed :

Cette fable n'a rien de bien ingénieux : mais, soumise à une sèche analyse, celle de *Rob Roy* ne paraîtrait pas meilleure ; et la fable, dans ces sortes de romans, n'est, pour ainsi dire, que le prétexte. Pourvu qu'elle serve à lier ensemble des scènes intéressantes, à diriger à travers une suite de tableaux fidèles et variés, elle est suffisante et atteint son but...

D'ailleurs peu de narrations ; l'action marche en quelque sorte d'elle-même : c'est une suite de scènes dramatiques dont chacune la fait avancer d'un pas, et l'auteur ne reparait guère que lorsqu'il s'agit de décrire.

Besides, minor improbabilities and tiresome passages are at least hinted at :

Ce n'est pas qu'il n'y ait quelquefois bien de l'invraisemblance et de l'arrangement dans le hasard qui les fait toujours [Magua, Hawkeye et les deux Mohicans] se rencontrer à point nommé. Ils courent aussi trop long-temps les uns après les autres, et l'on finit par se fatiguer de les voir, pendant près de deux volumes, se traîner de broussaille en broussaille, appuyer l'oreille contre terre, chercher sur le sable la trace de ceux qu'ils poursuivent, ou marcher à reculons pour faire perdre la leur.

(4) The review is signed O. and is therefore to be attributed to DUVERGIER DE HAURANNE. Cf. MORRIS, *Fenimore Cooper et Edgar Poe &c.* p. 16.

Cooper's' descriptive talent is appreciated, but with reservations :

On sait avec quelle minutieuse exactitude il s'en acquitte [de décrire]. Sa plume reproduit fidèlement les moindres détails de chaque lieu, la physionomie, les gestes, le costume et jusqu'à l'attitude de chacun de ses personnages. Mais comme les descriptions de M. Cooper ne saisissent pas aussi vivement que celles de Scott, il en résulte souvent un peu d'obscurité et de confusion. Ce qu'il peint, on ne le voit pas toujours, et mieux vaudrait alors laisser quelque chose à faire à l'imagination.

The description of Indian life and customs is, however, praised with some warmth :

... les mœurs farouches des Indiens, leur étrange manière de combattre, la perspicacité qui dans les forêts vierges leur fait retrouver la trace de l'ennemi, les ruses qu'ils emploient pour lui donner le change, tout ce qu'il y a enfin de bizarre et d'énergique dans leur existence vagabonde, M. Cooper le reproduit avec beaucoup de talent et de vie. Les deux Mohicans, Magua et *la longue carabine*, sont des figures que l'on peindrait après avoir lu son ouvrage.

As regards the characters, Hawkeye is summarily dismissed as an « intrépide maraudeur, anglais de naissance, mais Indien de mœurs et de caractère », while Chingachgook, Uncas and Magua are said to be « interesting » *in spite of* their exaggerated virtues or vices :

Nous ne répondrons pas... qu'il n'y eût un peu de classicisme théâtral dans la férocité soutenue de Magua et le dévouement inébranlable des Mohicans. La nature n'offre guère de caractères aussi absolus... Malgré ces défauts pourtant, les chefs Indiens intéressent...

The heroines are not commented upon. As for David Gamut, he is frankly condemned :

M. Cooper nous paraît moins heureux dans ses créations comiques. Son personnage de prédilection dans ce genre est un certain David Lagamme, psalmodiste dévot, que les Indiens

prennent pour fou et qui a un psaume prêt pour chaque occasion. Nous ne pouvons y voir qu'une caricature sans gaîté et sans vie.

La Revue Encyclopédique for June 1826 devotes much less space to the Mohicans, but its conclusion is far more flattering :

On trouve trop souvent peut-être, dans ce roman des scènes de combats et de batailles ; le dénouement est peut-être aussi trop tragique... mais l'intérêt y est vivement excité, et l'auteur a su peindre avec un art admirable la nature inculte de ce pays, et les mœurs sauvages de ses habitants.

It is but fair to add, however, that a year later the *Globe* published a study of Cooper's works — signed F. A. S. this time — which contained one of the warmest French eulogies of the three extant Leatherstocking Tales, *Pioneers*, *Mohicans* and *Prairie* (6) :

Ici tout est neuf, scènes et caractères ; car nous ne regardons pas comme ayant entamé cette mine vierge encore le roman d'*Atala*, ouvrage admirable sans doute, mais dont les descriptions appartiennent en grande partie à la riche imagination de l'auteur, et les personnages à notre civilisation, quelque éloignés qu'ils en paraissent. Nous savons assez par expérience que prétendre accomplir le pèlerinage du désert sur les traces de M. de Chateaubriand, c'est s'exposer à recueillir une ample moisson de désappointements. Il n'en est point ainsi sur les pas de M. Cooper. Nous avons parcouru une grande partie des sites qu'il a dépeints, observé sur plus d'un point les mœurs qu'il a décrites ; et nous pouvons certifier avoir retrouvé partout la plus scrupuleuse, la plus attachante fidélité.

After that date, and down to the end of the century, incidental criticisms of the Mohicans proper are exceedingly rare. The most important, by far, is that of LOUIS DE LOMÉNIE in his *Galerie des Contemporains Illustres* (1844) (7).

(5) Cf. pp. 703-04. The article is signed F. D.

(6) Cf. July 1827, p. 206.

(7) Cf. volume 8, last article, pp. 13-18.

It opens with a sincere tribute to the originality of the novel and to its European success :

Le roman des *Pionniers*, qui parut en 1822, fut le premier essai de Cooper dans un genre qu'il devait traiter avec un succès peut-être plus grand encore. Pour la première fois apparaîtrait chez lui la pensée de mettre en présence deux ordres de civilisation ou plutôt la civilisation et la sauvagerie. Cette pensée n'est encore là qu'à l'état d'ébauche. Mais l'auteur en tirera plus tard un très-grand parti. Elle est admirablement réalisée dans le *Dernier des Mohicans*, qui parut en 1826. Pour l'originalité, la grandeur, la grâce, la vigueur des descriptions, des caractères, et l'intérêt dramatique de l'action, le *Dernier des Mohicans* est le digne pendant du *Pilote*. De tous les romans de Cooper c'est peut-être celui qui a eu le plus de vogue en Europe.

There follows a tactful parallel between the Indians of Chateaubriand and those of Cooper :

Déjà M. de Chateaubriand, que l'on trouve toujours sur son chemin quand on remonte à la source de ce qui s'est écrit de beau en ce siècle, déjà M. de Chateaubriand nous avait initié aux charmes si nouveaux pour nous de la poésie transatlantique ; nous vivions d'*Atala* et des *Natchez* lorsque l'auteur du *Dernier des Mohicans*, de la *Prairie*, des *Puritains d'Amérique*, est venu étaler à nos yeux, dans toute sa richesse inculte, grandiose et variée, la mine même dont M. de Chateaubriand avait extrait un lingot d'or précieux, qu'il nous avait livré après l'avoir admirablement ciselé. Si Cooper est loin d'égaler pour le travail du style, pour la beauté artistique, son illustre prédécesseur dans la peinture des mœurs sauvages, peut-être rachète-t-il cette infériorité poétique par une plus grande vérité. Les sauvages de M. de Chateaubriand, Chactas, Atala, Celuta, Mila, Outougamiz, sont des créations ornées de toutes les séductions d'un beau génie. Les sauvages de Cooper sont beaux avant tout de leur beauté propre. Le romancier américain nous les livre à peu près tels que Dieu les fit, pleins d'harmonies et de contrastes, farouches et grossiers dans leurs actes, délicats et fins dans leurs impressions, élégants dans leur pose, bizarres dans leur ajustement, graves et pittoresques dans leur langage, féroces et impitoyables pour un ennemi vaincu, hospitaliers, naïfs, rusés, perfides, insoucieux du lendemain, plus orgueilleux que des rois, dédaigneux

de toute occupation autre que la chasse et la guerre, et obéissant à tous les instincts spontanés d'une nature qui n'a été encore ni épurée par le travail de la réflexion, ni dépravée par l'influence du sophisme.

Finally the characters are all approved of, since Colonel Munro and his daughters, Major Heyward and David Gamut, are said to be useful for the sake of contrast.

Yet Chingachgook, Uncas, Magua and above all Hawkeye, are singled out as superior to all the rest :

Chingachgook, le vieux chef Mohican, le jeune Uncas, si intrépide, si noble et si beau, le perfide et féroce Magua, sont des figures dessinées de main de maître, qui, rapprochées du vieux colonel Munro et de ses deux gracieuses filles, du jeune officier Duncan et du grotesque *David-la-Gamme*, le professeur en psalmodie, font du *Dernier des Mohicans*, par l'attrait des contrastes, une lecture pleine de saveur et de charme. Mais, ce qui donne à ce roman un intérêt tout particulier, c'est ce Natty Bumppo (sic), que les sauvages appellent *Oeil-de-Faucon*, espèce d'intermédiaire entre l'homme sauvage et l'homme civilisé, autre création originale de Cooper, plus originale encore peut-être que celle de *Tom-le-Long*...

Cette seule figure de Natty Bumppo suffirait pour assurer à M. Cooper la gloire durable des talents créateurs.

As for the comments of PHILARÈTE CHASLES in his *Etudes sur la littérature et les mœurs des Anglo-Américains au XIX^e siècle* (1851), they are deprived of all value by the fact that they are a mere reproduction of Chasles' free translation of the great article on Cooper which appeared in Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine* for April 1831 :

Parmi les nombreux romans que Cooper a publiés, celui qui s'isole par l'originalité la plus caractéristique, c'est le *Dernier des Mohicans*. En vain cherchiez-vous dans toute la bibliothèque des romanciers un ouvrage que l'on pût mettre en parallèle avec celui-ci. Matelots de Smollett ou de Fielding et mendiants de Walter Scott ont disparu. L'éternelle famille de héros qui se perpétue de fiction en fiction s'évanouit enfin. Vous êtes dans un monde nouveau, où respire dans sa majesté le génie originel de la race humaine. L'enfant du désert s'élève et se dessine devant vous... La nature qui l'environne est

grande comme lui. Elle a pour lui des secrets et des plaisirs que le reste du monde ignore. Ce roman où respirent une magie et une fraîcheur merveilleuse nous fait vivre de la vie des solitudes primitives et nous associe à l'homme qu'elles ont nourri.

Combien les caractères qui se meuvent dans ce drame bizarre sont remarquables et vrais ! Tous portent l'empreinte de la main puissante qui les a tracés. Le vieil Indien et son fils offrent le symbole de la vie sauvage. J'admire davantage encore *Longue Carabine*, personnage placé entre la civilisation et le désert, anneau intermédiaire entre l'industrie sociale et l'indépendance primitive (8).

In recent years Miss M. M. GIBB has contributed scattered but important appreciations on the various aspects of the Mohicans in her doctoral dissertation : *Le Roman de Bas-de-Cuir. Etude sur Fenimore Cooper et son influence en France* (9). These appreciations, however, are not, on the whole, very flattering for Cooper's masterpiece.

It must be granted that the « defence of Cooper's Indians » (10) is spirited enough :

On a déclaré que le Peau-rouge est loin d'être le personnage chevaleresque qu'est le Dernier des Mohicans, que les Indiens de Cooper sont de l'école de Heckewelder plutôt que de la nature (sic)...

Et certes, ces reproches paraissent plutôt justifiés. Il est vrai que les deux Mohicans font penser, de temps à autre à deux gentilshommes coloniaux qui, déguisés en Peaux-rouges, ont quitté un bal masqué chez le gouverneur anglais, pour aller essayer leurs costumes (sic) dans le cadre naturel. Uncas est en effet un peu galantin, et Mohicans et Iroquois profitent, décidément, du jour romantique sous lequel ils paraissent. L'idée que Fenimore Cooper s'est faite de l'homme rouge est personnelle et quelque peu curieuse.

Pourtant, à ceux qui sont de l'avis que ses Indiens sont trop bons et trop beaux pour être vrais, on peut dire que tous ne ressemblent pas aux Mohicans et à leur cousin germain

(8) Cf. *Etudes*, pp. 59-60 and *Revue Britannique*, January 1831, pp. 104-05.

(9) Paris, Champion, 1927.

(10) Cf. Miss GIBB's table of contents, p. 226, line 2.

Cœur-dur. Magua, Weucha et Tête-de-flèche sont aussi répugnants et cruels que les Fils de la Tortue sont estimables...

Puisque Fenimore Cooper avait choisi le Peau-rouge comme confident et ami de son personnage principal, il était naturel qu'il voulût le montrer sous son aspect le plus agréable. Doit-on regretter cette préférence ? Quand on pense aux nobles bandits et aux vertueuses courtisanes de Victor Hugo, aux guerriers d'Ossian... peut-on railler Fenimore Cooper d'avoir continué, avec réserve et modération, la tradition sympathique de l'homme primitif ?...

Pourquoi en vouloir à Fenimore Cooper d'avoir été de son époque, d'avoir donné à un personnage déjà pittoresque un caractère plus romantique encore ? Ne doit-on pas lui faire honneur d'avoir trouvé un sujet original et émouvant ? ... Il a su décrire le crépuscule d'une race, présenter cette race sous un jour qui la révèle touchante et sympathique. Que le réalisme de nos jours ne soit pas trop sévère pour les Fils de la Tortue, parce qu'ils sont un peu artificiels. Nous ne voudrions pas les connaître autres que nous les trouvons dans les *Récits*. N'oublions pas non plus l'effort consciencieux du romancier pour faire d'eux un portrait précis. Si, à cause de son esprit idéaliste et sentimental, il n'a pas tout à fait réussi, ce n'est pas faute de conscience ni d'information. (11)

On the other hand, the reader does not conceive a very favourable idea of the plot after reading the following passages :

Les faibles intrigues [des *Récits de Bas-de-Cuir*] traînent une longue série d'incidents qui se multiplient jusqu'à ce que le romancier estime que le compte est suffisant. Ce manque d'unité est particulièrement à noter dans *Le Lac Ontario* et *Le Dernier des Mohicans*, car ces deux récits sont coupés au milieu. L'arrivée des filles de Munro au Fort William Henry et celle de Mabel Dunham à Oswego devraient être les dénouements des deux romans : les incidents qui s'ensuivent auraient aussi bien précédé. Malgré la poésie de la deuxième moitié des *Mohicans*, l'intrigue traîne beaucoup, et dans cette brousse parfois des indications importantes se dissimulent. Souvent le lecteur est obligé de revenir en arrière pour ne pas perdre le fil du récit. Il y a plusieurs bévues : pour n'en citer qu'une, où Bas-de-Cuir et les Mohicans ont-ils trouvé la pirogue dans laquelle ils traversent le Horican pour suivre les captives de

(11) Cf. pp. 78-83.

Magua ? L'intérêt dramatique de la scène où les Délawares découvrent la tortue blasonnée sur la poitrine d'Uncas est presque évané, puisque l'auteur a eu la maladresse de prévoir (sic) cette scène dans un chapitre précédent. Le romancier est prolixe et se laisse aller aux digressions. On ne saurait le blâmer des nombreuses descriptions, car celles-ci sont le fort de Fenimore Cooper... Mais... On ne comprend pas le récit que fait le général (sic) Munro des origines de sa fille aimée, puisque Heyward vient de dire qu'il aime la cadette, et s'il y avait malentendu, il n'existe plus, et l'honneur n'exige donc pas que le père partage son secret...

La construction de ces romans laisse, en effet, à désirer ; mais on peut dire que cette imperfection mérite indulgence, vu l'époque où Fenimore Cooper écrivait et le genre qu'il cultivait. Le roman d'aventures risque d'être trop souvent une simple entilade d'épisodes, un peu lourde et uniforme dans l'ensemble, quoique chaque incident soit net. Fenimore Cooper savait faire un court récit d'une demi-douzaine de pages ou moins ; il n'arrivait pas à rassembler et à lier les incidents qu'il racontait pour en faire un roman bien composé. Plusieurs fameux romans de son temps ont eu le même défaut, et les auteurs alors favoris du public étaient plutôt prolixes (12).

Even the character of Hawkeye cannot be said to be particularly appreciated :

Le *Scout* des *Mohicans* est tout autre. C'est surtout un homme d'action, vif, alerte, et d'un froid sens commun. Tout en ayant un sentiment d'honneur (sic) très éveillé, il n'est pas surchargé de scrupules lorsque la situation demande une politique vigoureuse. Il parle peu de la nature, et point du tout de la vie en général, car il n'est pas philosophe. C'est dans le *Dernier des Mohicans* qu'il exécute le plus grand nombre d'exploits, étale la plus étonnante variété de ruses. Partout, dans les cinq romans, il a la conscience de lui-même (sic) ; dans les *Mohicans*, il se prend fort au sérieux. La persistance avec laquelle il réitère qu'il est *a man without a cross* — un homme dont le sang n'est pas croisé — devient monotone, et rappelle certains héros romantiques, indice qu'il n'est pas entièrement d'origine américaine...

C'est dans *La Prairie*, et surtout dans *Le Dernier des Mohicans* que le langage de Natty est le plus romantique. Son

(12) Cf. pp. 53-55.

discours est boursofflé de périphrases et d'hyperboles... chez le Bourreau de Berne et le Bravo, personnages d'une époque lointaine, ce langage ne choque pas ; mais chez Bas-de-Cuir il est tout simplement grotesque. (13)

Chingachgook — curiously enough — is also criticized for his pompous garrulity :

Chingachgook suit la même courbe psychologique que Bas-de-Cuir. Il est naturel et simple dans *Les Pionniers*, devient plus ou moins romanesque et phraseur dans *Les Mohicarts*... (14)

Cora is censured as too romantic and unnatural, while Alice is said to be as helpless as Louisa Grant, « l'ennuyeuse vierge » of the *Pioneers* :

...la vierge romantique, telle Cora Munro qui déploie un courage de lionne, défie l'ennemi, ou dit un dernier adieu à ses amis dans des discours solennels, et meurt tragiquement, comme il lui convient (sic)... Aussi faible [que Louisa Grant] est Alice Munro. Lorsque son amant (sic) veut l'enlever du camp des Mengwe, « la terreur lui ôte l'usage de ses membres », et le malheureux jeune homme est obligé de la porter lui-même...

Si Cora Munro rappelle la triste Rébecca amoureuse d'Ivanhoë, Louisa, Alice et Inez... reflètent une époque surannée où les héroïnes de roman, trop frêles et délicates pour ce monde, étaient sujettes à la pâmoison. (15)

As for David Gamut, he is considered almost as tiresome as the naturalist in the *Prairie* :

David Gamut et Obed Batt n'ont rien qui rachète leur inutilité. Fenimore Cooper a tenu sans doute à noter dans son tableau de mœurs indiennes le respect des sauvages pour les fous. Cette particularité a évidemment frappé son imagination, car il y est revenu dans *Le Tueur de daims*. Mais le maître de chant est venu de loin (sic), et il n'est pas amusant. (16)

(13) Cf. pp. 69, 73 and 75.

(14) Cf. p. 78.

(15) Cf. p. 94.

(16) Cf. p. 97.

Fortunately for Cooper's French admirers, G. C. BOSSET's doctoral dissertation on a similar subject (17) contains a much more flattering appreciation of the Mohicans as a whole :

Ainsi donc personne, parmi les admirateurs du chef-d'œuvre de Fenimore Cooper, n'avait compris ce que cet ouvrage apportait de vraiment neuf et d'émouvant... Nul ne semble avoir remarqué qu'avec *le Dernier des Mohicans* il se glissait dans l'affabulation romanesque un élément profondément original et capable d'en renouveler la formule ; c'était le roman d'aventure, inconnu alors en France, qui offrait des ressources incomparables à l'imagination de nos écrivains...

Le trait distinctif de ce genre, c'est qu'il suppose, à côté des personnages dont la destinée forme le sujet obligé de tout roman, d'autres facteurs, forces naturelles ou ethniques, dont l'emprise sur la vie et l'activité du héros fournit au romancier sa trame véritable. C'est la présence de ces agents inconnais-sables et puissants qui donne au roman d'aventure son caractère particulier et son charme. Fenimore Cooper, par déférence pour la coutume de son temps, ajoute à cette formule un élément historique dont l'importance alla d'ailleurs en s'affaiblissant au cours de sa carrière d'écrivain.

(17) Cf. *Fenimore Cooper et le roman d'aventure en France vers 1830*, Paris, Yrin, 1928, p. 92.

Conclusion

Susan Fenimore Cooper's contention that the *Mohicans* proved more successful in the United States than « any previous book from the same pen », and Lounsbury's statement to the effect that it was even more warmly welcomed in Europe, are certainly corroborated by a survey of the first American, British and French reviews of the work.

These statements, however, need qualifying. The American reviewers considered it a duty to insist on the half-concealed defects, rather than on the obvious merits, of a novel which had taken the public by storm ; while English critics preferred to dwell, with genuine enthusiasm, on the originality of the Indian scenes. As for the French critical reaction, it was both less copious and less favourable than might have been anticipated, since the only elaborate review — that of the *Globe* — is rather lukewarm in its praise.

Naturally enough, later criticisms of the *Mohicans* — as distinct from the *Leatherstocking Tales* taken as a whole — are rather scarce in England, and exceedingly rare in France, though they are not infrequent in the author's own country.

Naturally enough, also, their tone tends to harmonize gradually : the Americans expatiating more and more on the beauties of the work — in spite of occasional outbursts of spleen like MARK TWAIN'S famous article on Cooper's literary offences ; the British losing some of their former enthusiasm for Cooper's Indians ; and the French, with LOUIS DE LOMÉNIE, growing warmer in their appreciations.

In America the publication of the *Mohicans* coincided with the first attacks against Heckewelder's history of the Indian tribes,

so that Cooper's novel immediately became the storm center of the *Heckewelder Controversy* and suffered accordingly. Modern critics, however, generally vindicate Cooper's Indians from a literary point of view, and often hint that much might be said in favour of their historical accuracy.

It is curious to note that the historical chapters connected with the surrender of Fort William Henry, and the massacre that followed, have not given rise to another controversy. The early French reviewers, who might have found these chapters particularly objectionable, were those who praised most the historical element in the novel. They probably found ample satisfaction in the commemoration of a victory gained by the French in a losing contest. In one case, at any rate, ignorance of the details of colonial history and perhaps political prejudice, seem to have led a reviewer (1) to improve upon Cooper's strictures and to allude to « le barbare Montcalm ».

With regard to literary criticism proper, the *plot* has been most criticized — especially in the early American reviews — for the improbabilities of the opening chapters, the exaggerated accumulation of breathless episodes, the sameness of the dramatic incidents, the predilection of the author for scenes of horror, and the « needlessly tragical ending ». Cooper's unusual gifts as a story-teller, and as a master of suspense, have been nevertheless duly emphasized, particularly by his own countrymen.

The *painting of character* has been most appreciated by the early English reviewers, but the portraits of Hawkeye, of his Mohican associates, and of their fiendish enemy Magua, have won almost universal applause from the standpoint of literary excellence, if not from that of historical accuracy.

The other male characters have been severely censured in the United States — Colonel Munro for his « imbecility » in the second half of the novel, Major Heyward for his insignificance, and David Gamut for his being « a bore in every sense of the word. » The latter, however, has been rehabilitated by such modern critics as F.-L. PATTEE and JOHN ERSKINE.

(1) F. D. in the *Revue Encyclopédique* for June 1826, p. 703.

The heroines, who, in our time, have been criticized for their conventionality, were, in 1826, censured for their unlady-like deportment by the *North American Review*. The early reviewers, however, generally approved of them, although the Americans considered the allusions to Cora's coloured blood both painful and unnecessary. By a curious coincidence, in the summer of 1900, F.L. PATTEE maintained that Cooper had succeeded for once in creating a real heroine in Cora, while W.-D. HOWELLS, who had read the Mohicans in the hope of finding one, closed the book disappointed in his expectations.

Cooper's *style*, so bitterly denounced by MARK TWAIN, is now more and more appreciated from BALZAC's broad-minded point of view ; the critics insisting — even in text-books of rhetoric — on Cooper's extraordinary success in the description of scenery and action.

As to the place to be awarded the Mohicans in Cooper's long list of works of fiction, American, British and French critics now generally agree that it should be the first, if both popular success and literary excellence are taken into consideration.

APPENDIX I

Cooper's autobiographical notes

These notes were given us by MR. JAMES FENIMORE COOPER, grandson of the novelist, with the following introductory remarks :

« The two following documents, each incomplete, were found among the papers of Fenimore Cooper after the volumes of Cooper correspondence were printed.

Unfortunately both are incomplete, — one never was finished and the first, and perhaps most important, part of the other has been either lost or destroyed.

They were evidently prepared in answer to some of the many requests made of Cooper for a short sketch of his life, and never sent for publication.

They are printed here out of their chronological order. The one printed first, if the author made no mistake as to his age, was written in 1845, and the other in 1842, judging from the reference to Wing and Wing, which was published that year. »

We must add that the later document is given first because the introduction of the earlier one is missing.

We should also point out that, Cooper having been born in September 1789, the later document may have been written at the end of 1844. (Cf. note 3).

As for our contention that these notes were prepared at the request of GRISWOLD, it is based on the fact that his work on the *Prose Writers of America*, published in 1847, i. e. not long after the redaction of the notes, reproduces almost *verbatim* not a few of Cooper's remarks (1).

(1) See, for instance, in the preceding chapters, GRISWOLD's comments upon *Precaution*, *The Pioneers*, *The Pilot* and *Lionel Lincoln*.

1844-45

« Dear Sir :

Although I cannot lend myself to the very common mystification of writing an autobiography with another's pen (2), and am of opinion that these sketches of living men ought, in the interest of truth, very seldom to be published at all, I can have no objection to giving you a list of the several works I have written, in the order in which they were published. The receptions they met with, so far as the author can judge, are also at your service. As for the « any interesting circumstances connected with the different books » I shall be frank enough to tell you that I do not believe the American public has ever been sufficiently mystified in my case, to languish over any such matters, and I shall not begin the trade at fifty-five (3).

Precaution was the first of my books. It was written and published in 1820. Its success was moderate, both here and in England. It is true, some in this country fancied it contained so much knowledge of English life, as to try to believe it was written by an English connection of mine, and that I was merely a seeming editor. The knowledge of English life displayed in Precaution was barely removed from the contemptible, yet, its author got a sort of minor American reputation on it ! The book was vilely printed under the superintendence

(2) See Cooper's review of LOCKHART'S Life of Scott in the *Knickerbocker Magazine* for December 1838, p. 350.

(3) It will be remembered that Cooper had reached the age of fifty-five on September 15, 1844.

of a bookseller and his boy, for whose sins I was made to suffer. I remember one of the strictures of these gentlemen, who objected to the use of the word « creation » as applied to a Baronet, contending that « creation » was the province of the Deity. We submit to a great deal of this sort of critical domination in this country, more particularly among those inspired writers — (inspired they must be, since very few of them have had any education) who « are native and to the *Manor born* » (4).

The Spy came next. I think I do not mislead you in saying that this book succeeded every where. The North American, and many of the *old literati*, endeavoured to lessen it in the

(4) A favourite taunt of Cooper's at that period. See Cooper's answer to J. W. Webb's charges in the Effingham Controversy (Cf. *Brother Jonathan*, April 9, 1842, p. 417) :

« One of the greatest evils of a new and unsettled state of society, with a scattered population, is the ascendancy of ignorance and vulgarity. Were the intelligence, taste and breeding of America *concentrated*, as in other nations, I should be sorry to think that they would not exercise their customary power. While I admit our inferiority, in many essentials, to older countries, and believe we should do much wiser in endeavoring to amend, instead of falling into a passion at any exposure, and setting up silly claims to perfection, for one, I should be sorry to feel the necessity of confessing that there is not a broad vein of native and pure ore running through the land, which, when properly brought to the surface and circulated in legitimate coin, would entirely drive out of existence the base counterfeit that now passes so readily from hand to hand. When that day shall come, the world will be spared the spectacle of an editor in a town of 300,000 inhabitants — a Commercial Emporium, Heaven save the mark! publishing such a dogma as that « exceptions *sometimes form* a general rule ; » and the critic (!) who is so far ignorant of Shakspeare as to quote —

« For I am native here, and to the manner born, »
 « — native and to the Manor born, »

which is sense in no point of view, while it certainly is not Hamlet, would be ridiculed into silence as a

« Custom more honor'd in the breach
 Than the observance, »

public estimation, but it succeeded beyond a question. Were I to relate the meannesses and falsehoods that were resorted to, in certain quarters, to injure this book, it might surprise you. Nevertheless, it maintained itself, and was early translated into most of the European languages ; at *that day* a much less equivocal sign of success than it is now.

One word on the subject of translations, in passing. While the American journals were sedulously alluding to the fact that Scott and other writers was (sic) translated into many languages, great care was taken to mislead the public on this same subject, as regards me. Years after I was translated into German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Polish, Swedish, Danish, Low Dutch and several other dialects, it was occasionally mentioned, that I was translated into German and French ! If the fact were worth telling at all, it was worth telling correctly. If the mistake arose from ignorance, what is the knowledge of those who prefer [profess ?] to know every thing, worth ? If from fraud, how are we to appreciate their honesty ! I have never known an instance in which these persons made a mistake in my favor. All their blunders have been of a depreciating character ; and this from the press when the *Spy* appeared. The North American Review, which had better been named The *East American Review*, has made several of these mistakes, and this at a time when its friends sedulously circulated the report that the review itself was republished in England ! This is the review too, that circulated Capt. Mackenzie's opinions and facts of the Battle of Lake Erie ! (5)

The *Pioneers* followed The *Spy*, in 1822 [1823]. Its success was far from being striking, and it was thought the author was « written out ». The character of Natty Bumppo, however, took very well, and did much for the book.

The *Pilot* appeared in 1823 [1824]. This book was doubt-

(5) See Cooper's work entitled : *The Battle of Lake Erie &c.*, 1843.

fully received at home, but had great success in Europe from the start. Until we heard from England, Wiley and I fancied it a failure ; though Wiley certainly maintained it ought not to be one. It is said there is no original literature in this country. Where is the model for the Pilot to be found ?

Lionel Lincoln appeared in 1824 [1825]. This book failed, and perhaps justly. It was strictly an American Historical Novel, a class of which none ever succeeded. The end of the author's career was now openly announced.

The Mohicans was published in 1825 [1826], though I gave Charles Wiley, who was in pecuniary difficulties, two tales called « Imagination » and « Heart, » in 1824 [1823], to help him along. These tales never attracted any attention. I rather think The Last of the Mohicans an original book also. At all events, I do not know where to find its model. It succeeded perfectly, forming a totally new class of romance.

The Prairie appeared early in 1827. It was not popular at first, nor do I think it ever has been a very popular book, though the European critics put it at the head of the series. The character of Leatherstocking in this book, notwithstanding, is next to that in the Pathfinder.

Red Rover came next to Prairie, and the same year (6). The success of this book was probably greater than that of any book I ever wrote. It is worthy of remark, for the benefit of those who risk their reputations on criticism, and who have so often declared that the author of The Spy never wrote a popular book after he went to Europe, that Red Rover was written in Paris, as was also the Prairie. But such little mistakes never disconcert these gentry.

Wish-Ton-Wish appeared in 1829. It did not succeed.

I have forgotten The Travelling Bachelor which appeared

(6) This is true of the French and English editions only. See the Bibliography of our main work, p. 633, No. 9.

in 1828. This book was much abused in America for being too favorable to the country. It was honestly written, but I now admit the criticism was just. I would not write — nay, *could* not write such a book, now. Still, the views of New York Society in this book, and those given in *Home As Found* are *identical*, so far as they go.

Water Witch was published in 1830, with moderate success.

Bravo appeared in 1831. This book had more success perhaps, than even the *Red Rover*, at first. It was subsequently attacked on account of its favoring popular rights, and there it was less esteemed. As this was the first of my books in which the scene was laid abroad, since *Precaution*, I was abused as a deserter from my country, and all sorts of silly twaddle was uttered, for laying the scene of this book in Venice. I mention the circumstance merely to brand the accusation with the contempt it merits. God be thanked ! I am not yet a slave, though many have endeavored to hold me in mental bondage, and I will lay the scenes of my books wherever I please. *Au reste*, The *Bravo* is perhaps, *in spirit*, the most American book I ever wrote ; but thousands in this country, who clamor about such things, do not know American principles when they meet them, unless it may happen to be in a Fourth of July oration.

Note by Mr. Cooper

Here the biography of 1845 ends abruptly, at the bottom of a sheet numbered « 2, » and that of 1842 begins on another autograph sheet also numbered « 2, » and continues as follows :

1842

... Some ludicrous and even curious anecdotes might be related in connection with this propensity, but it is not probable your readers would feel any interest in them.

Between the ages of twenty and thirty, I read few novels, and cared very little about them. At length, a pure accident induced me to commence *Precaution*. This book was written in 1819. It was printed with very little supervision on my part. No book could have been worse printed. Stops were put in the middle of sentences, and strange words were substituted for many that were actually in the manuscript. I printed *Precaution* at my own risk. It was reprinted by Colburn, and had a certain degree of success in both countries. The book was purely English in plot and design. Many of the critical sages of this country fancied they saw the evidence that it was written in England, and set up here as a mystification ! The knowledge it betrayed of English society was of the most worthless and superficial kind, and yet I think it gained me more reputation in that way, than my own subsequent work in [on] England — a book written after six visits to the country, and under circumstances singularly favorable to observation ! A corrected edition of this book has recently been published by Lea & Blanchard.

Having accidentally produced an English book, I determined to write one purely American, by way of atonement. In this humour, *The Spy* was commenced. So little, however, was expected from any American work, in that day, that the new tale got on very slowly. It was printed as it was written, and a copy of the first volume, *bound*, lay about my house, several weeks, before a line of the second volume was thought of. At length the « beginning of the end » was undertaken. Still our progress was desultory and slow. Wiley began to fancy the

book would be made too long for profit ; to set his heart at ease, the last chapter was printed and *paged*, before several of the preceding chapters were even conceived. Owing to this fact, the *denouement* of the story is crowded and hurried ; a fault for which the critics, for a wonder, did not spare the author.

It has been said these books were not noticed in this country, until their reputation came from Europe. This is singularly untrue. Precaution was quite as much noticed as it deserved — most people, indeed, fancied it an English book — and, as for the *Spy*, its success was instantaneous and decided. It was published in the holidays, and I left town a day or two before its appearance, to join my family at a country place belonging to my wife in Westchester, when the book was written. So little was anything expected from an American book, that I do not think the *Spy* was mentioned a dozen times among us, for the next two or three weeks. The first news from it was a notice to prepare a second edition. This was considerably within the first months of publication (7). An edition of 1000 copies sold, at \$12, a copy, in less than four weeks ; certainly notice enough, under the circumstances. Three editions were printed that summer ; equal in amount to six of the common editions of that day.

The *Spy* was quite as successful in Europe, as in America. It was early translated into most of the languages of Christendom, including those of Russia, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, etc., and I got credit in my own country, for being translated into French and German ! I have always been properly grateful that so much truth and so little falsehood have been circulated concerning myself. At a time when the tales were translated

(7) A letter of Wiley to Cooper — which we had the good fortune to discover in the family chests at Fynmere, in August 1925 — throws new light on this point. See our main work, chap. VIII, pp. 349-51.

into eleven different languages, and in several instances when there were two or three translations into the same tongue, I was liberally credited in the *American reviews* with the honour of German and French. This was at period, when it was widely circulated and believed that the North American was reprinted in *England* — a calamity that never befel that periodical, I believe.

The *Pioneers* succeeded *The Spy*, in about a twelvemonth. It was only moderately successful ; its present popularity being in a good degree factitious. It never has been a work of *loyal* success, though criticism has rather favored it. At first, it was thought a failure.

Pilot came next. This book was on a plan so novel, that the critics, if there are any in this country, did not know how to receive it. For several weeks its fate was doubtful. Its American reputation certainly came from the East, though the North American « damned it with faint praise » as it had previously done *The Spy*. In Europe, its success was quick and decided. It has been said there is no original literature in America. I confess an inability to find the model for all the sea tales that now so much abound, if it be not the *Pilot*. This book was written in consequence of a conversation with the late Charles Wilkes of New York touching the *Pirate*. The universality of the *knowledge* of the author of *Waverley* was much extolled on account of this book. To me it proved he had undertaken a subject he did not understand and Mr. Wilkes was told that a book should be written that a seaman, at least, might feel some sympathy with.

Lionel Lincoln was next written. This was intended for an historical novel, on an American theme. It failed, like every other similar attempt.

Last of Mohicans followed. This book was also an experiment, being quite original as to manner and subject. Its success was decided everywhere ; and it still continues popular.

About this time a series of short tales was commenced, to

be called « Imagination, » « Heart, » « Manner, » « Manner and Matter. » It was to assist Wiley who was then in difficulty. The two first stories were written, and published under the title of « tales for Fifteen. » They attracted no attention.

Lionel Lincoln was the first copy right ever sold, it requiring three or four books to get a sufficient name to achieve such a miracle in America, in that day.

In 1828 [1827], *Prairie* was written, in Europe. It was not popular, though the European critics soon gave it the highest place in the series.

Red Rover followed, with brilliant success. Its sale and reception far exceeded our expectations. What is a little remarkable, certain critics praised it to the skies, who have since attributed to it, the mutiny of the *Somers* ! (8) The book is still popular. This work was written in Paris, though the author is said never to have succeeded after he left home. These small mistakes greatly enliven the logic of criticisms !

Wish-ton-wish was the next work, and it was pretty near a dead failure.

I forget ; the *Travelling Bachelor* was written between *Red Rover* and *Wish-ton-Wish*. This book was condemned as being too favorable to this country. I now think it was so myself, though it was honestly written, and I believe the country has essentially fallen off, since 1828. It is worthy of remark that the views of New York society in these fictitious travels, and in *Home As Found*, are *precisely the same*.

Water Witch followed *Wish-ton-Wish*, and was moderately successful.

Bravo came next, and met with a better reception than any book from the same pen with perhaps that of the *Red Rover*. This book was translated into Modern Greek.

(8) See Cooper's work entitled : *The Cruise of the Somers* &c. New York. J. Winchester, 1844.

Heidenmauer followed, with much less success.

Headsman did better ; though by no means as well as Bravo, or Red Rover.

Monikins came next ; and was a failure. Still, if Daniel were one half as explicit in his prophecies, we should be less agitated about the end of the world. I believe Monikins will be found to contain a tolerably plain prediction of the present state of this country, moral and pecuniary, with a very clear indication of the cause. It was written eight years since. [1834-35]

Then succeeded a series of Travels, in Switzerland, Italy, England, France, etc. These failed, five books in all, scarce paying for printing. I say failed, meaning in America ; though, I am told they have done better abroad ; Switzerland in particular having become a sort of guide book.

The American Democrat was next ; and enough of it did not sell to pay for the paper. The mistake was in the title. Were the Bible called Democratical, it would go out of favor, in this country.

Then came Homeward Bound and Home As Found. The first was very successful ; the last contained too many wholesome truths to meet with favor. It has raised an issue that other countries will settle, in the end.

The Naval History followed. This book was pretty well received, though it has not been a very successful work as to profits. It was much belied, and these lies injured both book and author, in a way that no subsequent reparations ever can or will repair. When masses go wrong, it is never by halves, and the evil is irremediable.

Pathfinder came next, and met with great success. By the best judges, this book has been placed at the top of the series to which it belongs ; and perhaps justly. It is certainly a better book than Prairie, which had hitherto headed the list.

Mercedes failed ; the story was too familiar.

Deerslayer was nearly as well received as Pathfinder. In

some respects it is a better book ; though I think not as a whole. Many excellent judges place it highest however with me, Hetty Hutter is the favorite female character.

Two Admirals was well received, but sold badly on account of the times. The nautical scenes of this book, are much the best from the same hand. The meeting with and capture of the first Frenchman is the truest and most spirited description the author has ever written. As you will understand these comparisons are only between works from the same hand.

Wing and Wing is just out [November 28, 1842], and is well received. How highly it is appreciated may be seen in the circumstances that it is called a work of immoral tendency. Its proper place in the naval series is about fourth, though, as to popularity, it is likely to stand second, or third.

The different works appeared as follows, viz. —

1. Precaution	1820
2. Spy	1821
3. Pioneers	1822 [1823]
4. Pilot	1823 [1824]
5. Lionel	1824 [1825]
Tales for Fifteen	1824 [1823]
6. Last of Mohicans	1825 [1826]
7. Prairie	1827
8. Red Rover	1827
9. Travelling Bachelor	1828
10. Wish-ton-Wish	1829
11. Water Witch	1830
12. Bravo	1831
13. Heidenmauer	1832
14. Headsman	1833
15. Monikins	1835
16. Switzerland	1836
17. France	1836 [1837]
18. Italy	1837 [1838]
19. Switzerland and France	1837 [1836]

20. England	1837
21. American Democrat	1837 [1838]
22. Homeward Bound	1838
23. Home as Found	1838
24. Naval History	1839
25. Pathfinder	1840
26. Mercedes	1840
27. Deerslayer	1841
28. Abridged Naval His.	1841
29. Two Admirals	1842
30. Wing and Wing	1842

I believe this is making a « clean breast » of all my literary transgressions. Several reviews and light articles, however, have been written. Among others is an answer to the Edinburgh on the subject of the Naval History (9). These answers have attracted very little notice not one of my acquaintances in ten appearing to have ever heard of it, although most of them have seen the articles in the Edinburgh. It appears to be a matter of course that an American must be wrong when he comes in collision with either of the great English periodicals.

All I have to say, in the way of summary is soon told. As a writer, I have never been supported by the written, critical opinion of my own country. The tone of the American notices was often alluded to, with surprise, in Europe, where it is not generally as well understood, as it seems to be here, that our literature is so strong as to bear trifling with. I confess there was a period when this circumstance both surprised and pained me, but that day has long since passed. Certainly my *interests* may be, and *have been* seriously affected by this course of the American press, but I believe my feelings are more reasonably independent of it. I hold it to be a moral

(9) See *The Democratic Review* for May and June 1842. pp. 411-35 and 515-41.

impossibility for any man of ordinary common sense, and ordinary self-respect, to care anything for the floating public opinion of this country. It is too evanescent and mutable, is produced by causes too impure, and incited by agencies too worthless, to command any influence except with the unreflecting, ignorant, interested or pusillanimous. Still it controls the daily interests, and weighs upon the characters of near twenty millions of human beings. Such a public opinion can neither give nor take away reputations. It rashly leaps into existence and sneakingly steals out of it. The press, with honorable exceptions, has got to be a body of gossips *thinking aloud*, and the common mind that is formed by such alignment, partakes of that character which is usually created in the atmosphere of amiable elderly ladies, who occupy themselves principally with the concerns of their neighbors.

APPENDIX II

Other declarations of Cooper on the subject of American, British or French criticism

I. - Cooper's uncompromising attitude towards "self-reviewing" and "puffing"

A Letter to His Countrymen (1834) pp. 5-6 :

At no period of my life have I had any connection with any review, notice or *critique* of any sort, that has appeared for or against me as a writer. With a single, and a very immaterial exception, I do not know to this hour, who are the authors of any favorable notice, biography, or other commentary, that has appeared on myself, or on any thing I have published ; and in the case of the exception, I was made acquainted with the name of the writer, after the notice was written. As respects Europe, so far from having used any undue means to procure reviews, criticisms, or puffs, I am ignorant of the names of the writers of every thing of this sort that has appeared which has been in my favor ; have probably not even read a dozen of these notices, with the exception of such as were to be found in the daily prints, since I have been absent ; have refused numerous applications from the editors of periodicals, to send them critiques and copies of the books I had written ; and, whenever it could be done, without obvious impropriety, have uniformly declined making the acquaintance of those who were known to be connected with what are called critical publications. In several instances, the very reviews

which have made direct applications to me for favorable notices, have turned against me when it was understood that the request would not be complied with (1). In short, I affirm, that every report or asseveration that any review has been written in Europe, or any where else, by my connivance, or even with my knowledge, to produce an impression on the public mind at home, or with any other view, is founded in error or in malice. For a short time, I was a voluntary contributor of a periodical, that was edited by an old messmate, (Col. Gardner, the present Deputy Postmaster-General,) and I think he will remember the fact, that, when he declared his intention to obtain a favorable notice of « *The Pioneers*, » I objected to it, on the ground of its being painful to me to see *critiques* of this kind in a publication with which I was connected, and that my objection prevailed. (2)

II. - Cooper's sensitiveness to criticism and his consequent scornful attitude towards reviewers in general.

The Pioneers (preface of 1823) :

I should think criticism to be the perfection of human acquirements, did there not exist this discrepancy in taste. Just as I have made up my mind to adopt the very sagacious hints of one learned Reviewer, a pamphlet is put into my hands, containing the remarks of another, who condemns all that his rival praises, and praises all that his rival condemns. There I am, left like an ass between two locks of hay ; so that I have determined to relinquish my animate nature, and remain stationary, like a lock of hay between two asses.

(1) (*Cooper's note*): I am just informed by a friend, that he was lately applied to, by the editor of a literary journal in this city, to write a favorable notice of « *The Headsman*; » that he declined; and that an unfavorable one soon after appeared in the same publication!

(2) See also Cooper's review of LOCKHART'S *Life of Scott* in the *Knickerbocker Magazine* for December 1838, p. 355.

It is now a long time, say the wise ones, since the world has been told all that is new and novel. But the Reviewers (the cunning wights !) have adopted an ingenious expedient, to give a freshness to the most trite idea. They clothe it in a language so obscure and metaphysical, that the reader is not about to comprehend their pages without some labour. This is called a great « range of thought ; » and not improperly, as I can testify ; for, in my own case, I have frequently ranged the universe of ideas, and come back again in as perfect ignorance of their meaning as when I set out. It is delightful, to see the literati of a circulating library get hold of one of these difficult periods ! Their praise of the performance is exactly commensurate with its obscurity. Every body knows, that to seem wise is the first requisite in a great man...

The « *Pioneers* » is now before the world, Mr. WILEY, and I shall look to you for the only true account of its reception. The critics may write as obscurely as they please, and look much wiser than they are ; the papers may puff or abuse, as their changeful humours dictate ; but if you meet me with a smiling face, I shall at once know that all is essentially well... (3)

(3) In connection with this attitude of Cooper's towards reviewers, BRYANT'S well-known letter to DANA (September 1, 1825) should of course be quoted: « He is printing a novel entitled *The Last of the Mohicans*. The first volume is nearly finished. You tell me that I must review him next time myself. Ah, Sir! he is too sensitive a creature for me to touch. He seems to think his own works his own property, instead of being the property of the public, to whom he has given them ; and it is almost as difficult to praise or blame them in the right place as it was to praise or blame Goldsmith properly in the presence of Johnson. »

This letter, however, ought to be interpreted in the light of BRYANT'S statements in his *Memorial Discourse* (1852, pp. 69-70) : « A manly expression of opinion, however different from his own, commanded his respect. Of his own works, he spoke with the same freedom as of the works of others ; and never hesitated to express his judgment of a book for the reason that it was written by himself ; yet he could bear with gentleness any dissent from the estimate he placed on his own writings. »

III. - Dependence of American opinion on British criticism.

Afloat and Ashore (1844) chap. 27, end :

The miserable moral dependence of this country on Great Britain, forty years since, cannot well be brought home to the present generation. It is still too great, but has not a tithe of its former force... It is now a quarter of a century since the writer's first book appeared. Two or three months after the publication, he was walking down Broadway with a friend, when a man of much distinction in the New York circles was passing up, on the other sidewalk. The gentleman in question caught the writer's eye, bowed, and crossed the street, to shake hands and inquire after the author's health. The difference in years made this attention marked. « You are in high favor, » observed the friend, as the two walked away, « to have — pay you such a compliment — your book must have done this. » « Now mark my words — I have been puffed in some English magazine, and — knows it. » The two were on their way to the author's publishers, and, on entering the door, honest Charles Wiley put a puff on the book in question into the writer's hand. What rendered the whole thing more striking, was the fact that the paragraph was as flagrant a puff as was ever written, and had probably been paid for, by the English publisher.

IV. - On the small influence of reviewers in Great Britain.

England (Letter 18, end. Written in 1828) :

I have been much struck, here, with the little impression that is made by the reviews. Exceptions certainly exist ; but the critical remarks that, written here, produce no visible effect, would give a work its character with us. Everybody that is at all above the vulgar appears to understand that reviewing « is the great standing mystification of the age. »

V. - On French reviewing.

France (Vol. II, letter 4, end. Written in 1828) :

There is not, at this moment, within my knowledge, a single critical literary journal, of received authority, in all France. This is a species of literature to which the French pay but little attention, just now, although many of the leading daily prints contain articles on the principal works, as they appear.

By the little that has come under my observation, I should say the fraudulent and disgusting system of puffing and of abusing, as interest or pique dictates, is even carried to a greater length in France, than it is in either England or America. (4)

(4) (*Cooper's note*): The writer suffers this... to stand as it was written nine years since ; but since his return home, he has discovered that we are in no degree behind the French in the corruption and frauds that render the pursuits of a writer one of the most humiliating and revolting in which a man of any pride of character can engage, unless he resolutely maintains his independence, a temerity that is certain to be resented by all those, who, unequal to going alone in the paths of literature, seek their ends by clinging to those who can, either as pirates or robbers.

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VU le 29 octobre 1937.

Pour le Doyen et par autorisation

Le Professeur Délégué,

Membre du Conseil de l'Université :

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